THE SONNET IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1865-1900

by

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PREFACE

I first became interested in the sonnet through reading the lyrics in Palgrave's Golden Treasury, especially the sonnets of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Keats. Then, later, upon learning that little work had been done on the sonnet-writers of America, I very gladly elected this field when choosing a thesis subject.

For help in the writing of this dissertation I am grateful to Professor Josephine Burnham, Professor R. D. O'Leary, Professor E. M. Hopkins, and Professor John H. Nelson. I extend my thanks also to those on the staff of the Watson Library who have aided me.

M. E. D.

The Sonnet

"Scorn not the sonnet. Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honors. With this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
With it Camoens soothed an exile's grief;
The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle-leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow; a glow-worm lamp,
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Fairyland
To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
Soul-animating strains,--alas! too few."

- William Wordsworth.

The Sonnet's Voice

Yon silvery billows breaking on the beach
Fall back in foam beneath the star-shine clear,
The while my rhymes are murmuring in your ear
A restless lore like that the billows teach;
For on these sonnet-waves my soul would reach
From its own depths, and rest within you, dear,
As, through the billowy voices yearning here,
Great nature strives to find a human speech.
A sonnet is a wave of melody:
From heaving waters of the impassioned soul
A billow of tidal music, one and whole,
Flows in the "octave"; then returning free,
Its ebbing surges in the "sestet" roll
Back to the deeps of Life's tumultuous sea.

- Theodore Watts.

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Chapter I

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE FIELD

I

The history of the sonnet in America is but imperfectly known because no especial attention has been given to it as a specific form of lyric poetry. Very few collections of the sonnets written in America have been published. The sonnets of Boker and Mifflin have been issued in separate collections; so have those of Longfellow and Robinson. But, for the most part, authors who have written many kinds of poems, including sonnets, have published their poetry without separating the sonnets.

Just as there are classical selections in music, so are there classical sonnets in poetry. For the same reasons that composers of music have turned to the old masters for the study of music, so have the sonneteers of America turned to Dante, Michael Angelo, and Petrarch, sonneteers of Italy; to du Bellay, Ronsard, and other sonnet-writers of France; and to Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, and other sonnet-writers of England for the study of themes and style.

Longfellow studied the poetry of Dante, and in 1874 translated seven sonnets of Michael Angelo into English. The study of Dante's Divina Commedia inspired

Longfellow to write a series of six sonnets in praise of the poem. Sonnets I and II were written in 1864; Sonnet III, in 1866 at the time when the Translation of Dante was finished; and Sonnet IV in 1867.

Although few of the sonneteers of America, like Longfellow, studied directly the Italian sonnets, yet many of them were influenced indirectly through the English poets who in their time had read Dante, Petrarch, and Michael Angelo. Aldrich took Tennyson for his master; Taylor took both Tennyson and Shelley. Hayne sang to the music of Keats and Tennyson. Stoddard has been called the "American Keats" because he imitated Keats' poetry. His admiration for Keats is expressed in the sonnet, To the Memory of Keats, in which he says,

Thou hast the Laurel, Master of my soul!

Gilder took Milton for his master. He met Helena de Kay at the very time that he came upon Rossetti's translation of the Vita Nuova; the result of the conjunction was the love sonnets of The New Day.[1]

When he was about sixteen, Howells turned to Shakespeare, later to Longfellow, and still later to Dante. Boker, too, was interested in Italian literature, but

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[1] Cambridge History of American Literature, vol. III, p. 49.

he was influenced indirectly by it in his sonnet-writing. Professor E. C. Bradley calls him the "American Sidney" because the theme of Boker's sonnet sequence is comparable to that of Sidney's Astrophel and Stella. [2] Sidney, before him, was of course influenced by Petrarch in the selection of the theme of unrequited love.

At the end of the nineteenth century the sonnet in America becomes realistic. The other sonneteers mentioned imitated poetry, in both thought and form, by authors not known especially for their sonnets; for example, Shelley and Tennyson wrote only a few sonnets. In the poetry of Hovey, however, it is the influence of Whitman that is apparent especially in the choice of subject matter. He has caught the singing spirit of America from the poetry of Whitman, and has embodied it in his own sonnets. On the other hand, Robinson turned to Hardy of England and gave to the sonnet in America Hardy's psychological realism.

Somewhat apart from Hovey and Robinson is Santayana whose sonnets carried forward the tradition of classicism. In the hands of Hovey [3] and Robinson [4], so much new life

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[2] E. C. Bradley, George Henry Boker, p. 342.
[3] World and Poet
[4] Cliff Klingenhagen

was poured into the subject matter that only the form remains to identify the poems as sonnets. We read classical sonnets for their formal excellence and beauty but the new ones in America for their material about the mental life of America.

II

When the influence of the Romantic movement of England reached America, a few poets became interested in the sonnets of Wordsworth and Keats. Before the beginning of the Civil War, Longfellow, Lowell, Timrod, Hayne, Lanier, Taylor, and Baker had been writing sonnets. As early as 1842, Longfellow had written the sonnet, Mezzo Cammin; and in 1843 had appeared eight of Lowell's. In 1860 Timrod had published seventeen sonnets; from 1850 to 1865, Hayne had written twenty-eight; and, about the time when the Civil War began, Lanier, Taylor, and Boker were writing sonnets.

At the close of the Civil War and at the beginning of the period from 1865 to 1900, there were but few poets who wrote sonnets, and those few penned only a small number. From 1865 to 1875, Bryant, Longfellow, Hayne, Sill, and Stoddard were writing sonnets. Before 1865 Hayne had written twenty-eight; in 1865 he published two;

in 1872 he began to write more profusely. During the same time Longfellow was translating Dante's Divinia Commedia and was writing sonnets in praise of Dante's poem. From 1865 to 1875 Bryant wrote seven sonnets; Sill wrote five; and Stoddard six. In 1875 Longfellow's Book of Sonnets of forty-one poems appeared. Longfellow continued composing sonnets from 1875 to 1882, the year of his death. Altogether he published sixty-three sonnets. Those which have just been mentioned and others which appeared between 1865 and 1875 would make about one hundred.

From 1875 to 1885, the number increased more rapidly. Hayne continued to write, and in 1886, his last year of authorship, he issued seventy-five. Helen Hunt Jackson wrote ninety-two sonnets from 1870 to 1885, the year in which they appeared in print. Gilder published thirty-two in 1875, and continued to write until 1900. In 1877 Lanier published thirteen. Riley began writing sonnets in 1876, and at the close of the decade in 1885, he had a total of fifty. The sonnets of the authors just mentioned and those of others who wrote from 1875 to 1885 numbered about two hundred fifty.

The decade from 1885 to 1895 was a prolific one; the number of sonneteers and sonnets continued to grow rapidly. In 1885 appeared twenty-one sonnets written

by Aldrich, and soon after that he wrote twelve more. In 1886 Boker completed his sequence containing three humdred and thirteen sonnets. [5] In 1889 Louise Chandler Moulton contributed one hundred thirty-three sonnets to the poetry of America; and Edith Thomas, eighty. In 1893 appeared the first sonnets of Santayana. Gilder continued to write, and by 1900 he had one hundred five. At the time when Riley brought his writing to a close about 1894, he had a collection of seventy-eight. Because there were many poets from 1885 to 1895, and because they wrote many sonnets, the additions to the poetry of America at this time reached the grand total of six hundred seventy-five.

The closing half-decade, from 1895 to 1900, was important for the sonnets of a few new authors of note, and for the new sonnets of several poets who were writing before 1895. In 1897 Van Dyke wrote four sonnets; in 1899 Markham published ten; and in the same year Mifflin issued one hundred sixty-five. It was notable also, because Santayana resumed the writing of meritorious classical sonnets, forty-one in number, which added richness to the field.

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[5] E. C. Bradley, Sonnets: George Henry Boker, 1929.

As a whole, the writers from 1865 to 1900 were prolific. During these years thirty-one poets of importance wrote as many as seventeen hundred sonnets, among them many being on well-known conventional themes and a few fresher ones which reflect a part of the characteristic life of a new country.

Chapter II

THE EASTERN SONNETEERS

I

Introductory

The sonneteers of America, during the period from 1865 to 1900, lived in four distinct literary sections of the United States: the East, the Middle West, the Far West, and the South. The eastern group included the poets of the New England states, New York and Pennsylvania. To the Middle West belonged the soneteers of Ohio and Indiana; and to the Far West belonged the soneteers of California and Oregon. The southern group included the poets of Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Kentucky. There were two groups of New England sonnet-writers. To the first one belonged Bryant, Longfellow, and Lowell; the second generation included Helen Hunt Jackson, Louise Chandler Moulton, and Celia Thaxter. The New York writers fell into three groups according to the decades in which they wrote. To the first one belonged Bayard Taylor, Stoddard, Stedman, Aldrich, and Bunner; to the second, Woodberry, Sherman, Van Dyke, and Markham; to the third, Howells, Hovey, Robinson, and Santayana.

The East produced many more sonneteers than the

states west and south of New York and Boston, which were the early literary centers. The Middle West is a larger literary area, but only three poets from that section have been included here: Edith Thomas of Ohio; Paul Lawrence Dunbar of Ohio, the only important soneteer of the negro race; and James Whitcomb Riley, the "Hoosier Sonneteer"of Indiana. Sill was the only important sonneteer of the Far West, unless Markham could be called a western sonneteer because his birthplace was in Oregon.

The South had a small number of representatives. The earliest ones were Hayne and Lanier of Georgia and South Carolina, respectively; then much later, Lizette Woodworth Reese and Margaret Preston of Baltimore.

In the sections of this chapter which follow, the literary characteristics of the sonneteers will be discussed in the order in which their sonnets were written.

II

New England Sonneteers

Bryant, Longfellow, and Lowell were the chief members of the New England group. Although Bryant later went to New York, he passed his youth in Massachusetts and was in spirit Puritan. The sonnets of these poets

are conventional; chiefly Petrarchan in form, but a few Shakespearean.

William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) was the first poet to contribute sonnets to American literature after 1865. In 1867 he published four, and in 1876 three more. The sonnet, November, is illustrative of Bryant's interest in nature, though it is not so dignified and condensed in thought as Thanatopsis. Consumption is the only sonnet having for its theme the subject of death, found so frequently in Bryant's other poetry. The description of death in its closing couplet is in the spirit of Thanatopsis:

> Close thy sweet eyes, calmly, and without pain:
> And we will trust in God to see thee yet again! [1]

In Memory of John Lothrop Motley is somewhat better than the other sonnets by Bryant because it is simple and elevated in tone, as are his best known poems. Besides writing original sonnets, Bryant translated one from the Portuguese of Semedo. It is Petrarchan in form and is addressed to Laura. The sonnets of Bryant are not memorable, but they are interesting in a quiet way.

Much more important was the work of Longfellow

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[1] Bryant's Poetical Works, p. 75.

(1807-1882), whose poetic reputation depended in a large part upon his collection of sixty-three sonnets. Unlike that of Bryant, Longfellow's best poetry was in his sonnets; but, like Bryant, he was a translator. Before 1865 he translated Michael Angelo's sonnet, Dante; and, during the progress of his work in translating Dante's Divina Commedia, he wrote six sonnets to be used as a poetical introduction. His feeling for Dante's work he expressed in the first and best sonnet on the Divina Commedia:

I.

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs die away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait. [2]

His own indebtedness to poetry for inspiration was stated by Longfellow in the sonnet he wrote in the dedication of his poem, Michael Angelo:

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[2] Longfellow's Poems, p. 292.

Men build their houses from the masonry
Of ruined tombs.[3]

and the last line of the poem is as follows:

Quickened are they that touch the
Prophet's bones.

Longfellow's most original work is found in his collection called, A Book of Sonnets, written during the years from 1873 to 1882. His interest in English authors is shown in the poems entitled Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Keats. The following sonnet shows Longfellow's style:

A Summer Day by the Sea

The sun is set; and in his latest beams
Yon little cloud of ashen gray and gold,
Slowly upon the amber air unrolled,
The falling mantle of the Prophet seems.
From the dim headlands many a light-house gleams,
The street-lamps of the ocean; and behold,
O'er head the banners of the night unfold;
The day hath passed into the land of dreams.
O summer day beside the joyous sea!
O summer day so wonderful and white,
So full of gladness and so full of pain!
Forever and forever shalt thou be
To some the gravestone of a dead delight,
To some the landmark of a new domain.[4]

The simplicity of the theme, the beauty of the picture, and the smooth rhythm reflect the genius of Longfellow.

In 1845 Longfellow wrote The Evening Star, ad-

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[3] Longfellow's Poems, p. 537.

[4] Ibid., p. 316.

dressed to his first wife, the only love sonnet in his collection. In the first one written on the Divina Commedia, Longfellow merely alluded to his grief at the death of his second wife; but, in 1879, eighteen years after her death, he fully expressed his sorrow in the following sonnet:

The Cross of Snow

In the long, sleepless watches of the night,
A gentle face - the face of one long dead--
Looks at me from the wall, where round its head
The night-lamp casts a halo of pale light.
Here in this room she died; and soul more white
Never through martyrdom of fire was led
To its repose; nor can in books be read
The legend of a life more benedight.
There is a mountain in the distant West
That, sun-defying, in its deep ravines
Displays a cross of snow upon its side.
Such is the cross I wear upon my breast
These eighteen years, through all the changing scenes
And seasons, changeless since the day she died. [5]

Longfellow's gift in the use of simile is evident in the following well-known poem:

Nature

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er
Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
And leave his broken playthings on the floor,
Still gazing at them through the open door,
Nor wholly reassured and comforted
By promises of others in their stead,
Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;
So Nature deals with us, and takes away
Our playthings one by one, and by the hand
Leads us to rest so gently, that we go

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[5] Longfellow's Complete Works, p. 323.

Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay
Being too full of sleep to understand
How far the unknown transcends the what we know. [6]

"For ripeness of style and imagery," says Paul Elmer More, "a volume of Longfellow's sonnets would stand easily at the head of American poetry, and it would show an aspect of his genius which is obscured by the bulk of his more popular work. It would place him as a peer among the great sonnet writers of England." [7]

The third poet of this group, James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), was also interested in Dante. Unlike Longfellow, he did not do his best-known work in his sonnets, twenty-nine in number, written during the years from 1873 to 1897. Lowell's most lyrical sonnets were written before the war; and when he took up sonnet-writing again in 1873, the tenor of his poetry was intellectual. His sonnets express the individual freedom of a scholar's thinking, a freedom which marked the beginning of a new independent spirit in America. Longfellow interpreted the characteristics of A Summer Day by the Sea with ecstasy; whereas Lowell, in the poem, Scottish Border, appeals to the intellect rather than to the emotions:

As sinks the sun behind yon alien hills
Whose heather-purpled slopes, in glory rolled,

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[6] Longfellow's Complete Works, p. 318.

[7] Shelburne Essays, p. 147.

Flush all my thought with momentary gold,
What pang of vague regret my fancy thrills.
Here 'tis enchanted ground the pleasant tills,
Where the shy ballad dared its blooms unfold,
And memory's glamour makes new sights seem old,
As when our life some vanished dream fulfils.
Yet not to thee belong these painless tears,
Land loved ere seen: before my darkened eyes,
From far beyond the waters and the years,
Horizons mute that wait their poet rise;
The streams before me fades and disappears,
And in the Charles the western splendor dies.[8]

Longfellow and Lowell were important with Taylor, Boker, and Aldrich, as pioneers in the revival of the sonnet in America.[9]

II

Early New York Sonneteers

After the Civil War there flourished a group of poets who looked to Keats and Tennyson for their inspiration and who loved art for art's sake. Among them were Taylor, Stoddard, Stedman, and Aldrich, who were called the "School of Keats" because they admired and imitated, in a way, the luxurious imagery and the melody of Keats' verse. They wove poetry from poetry, and wrote from their heads rather than their hearts. Taylor, Aldrich, Stoddard, and Stedman published a few excellent sonnets.

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[8] Lowell's Poetrical Works, IV, p. 183.

[9] C. H. Crandall's Representative Sonnets by American Poets, p. 87.

Bayard Taylor (1825-1878) was the earliest sonneteer of this group. He adhered strictly to the tradition of polished Petrarchan form in the eleven sonnets written after 1861. He colored his sonnets with material from Grecian, Italian, and English literature. Taylor wrote four sonnets, addressed to personal friends, which he named Christmas Sonnets; in the last one he praised Petrarch:

> If I could touch with Petrarch's pen this strain
> Of graver song, and shape to liquid flow
> Of soft Italian syllables the glow
> That warms my heart, my tribute were not vain.[10]

In sonnet II of the same group, in honor of Stoddard, he wrote:

> I Shelly's mantle wore, you that of Keats,--
> Dear dreams, that marked the Muse's childhood then,
> Nor now to be disowned! The years go by;
> The clear-eyed Goddess flatters us no more.[11]

The following lines from the sonnet, From the North, show that he was influenced by Grecian poetry;

> From the gray olives of the Cretan shore
> To those that hide the broken Phidian frieze,
> Of our Athenian home,--[12]

And, in the sonnet, To Marie (with a copy of the Translation of Faust), Taylor points out the relation of his own work to the source of his inspiration:

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[10] Taylor's Poetical Works, p. 213.

[11] Ibid., p. 213.

[12] Ibid., p. 212.

You were the breeze and sunshine, I the soil:
The form is mine, color and odor yours. [13]

Another poet who not only belonged to the "School of Keats" but has been called the "American Keats" was Richard Henry Stoddard (1825-1903). Stoddard's longer poems show a likeness to Keats' poetry more than do his sonnets, seven in number; six, written in 1871, and one in 1880. He wrote his first one in praise of Bayard Taylor. The second one, To Edmund Clarence Stedman (With Shakespears's Sonnets), suggests the relation of a poet to his period:

Had we been living in the antique days,
With him, whose young but cunning fingers penned
These sugared sonnets to his strange--sweet friend,
I dare be sworn we would have won the bays.

In the same poem he wrote in the sestet:

Yes, there's a luck in most things, and in none
More than in being born at the right time.

and at last he said:

But many a man has lived an age too late. [14]

In the sonnet, To James Lorimer Graham, Jr. (With Shakespeare's Sonnets), Stoddard expressed his admiration for Shakespeare:

Stay, this Book of Song
May show my poverty and thy desert,
Steeped, as it is, in love, and love's sweet wrong,
Red with the blood that ran through Shakespeare's heart. [15]

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[13] Taylor's Poetical Works, p. 214.
[14] Stoddard's Complete Poems, p. 320.
[15] Ibid., p. 321.

And, in the sonnet, To the Memory of Keats, he acknowledged the source of his inspiration:

Thou hast the Laurel, Master of my Soul! [16]

and in praise of Keats, he said:

I kiss thy words as I would kiss thy face,
And put thy book most reverently away.
Girt by thy peers, thou hast an honored place,
Among the kingliest--Byron, Wordsworth, Gray.
If tears will fill mine eyes, am I to blame?
"Oh smile away the shades, for this is fame!" [16]

His last sonnet was Abraham Lincoln, in which he celebrated the greatness of a character:

This man whose homely face you look upon,
Was one of Nature's masterful, great men. [17]

Less like Keats than Stoddard, was Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833-1908). In contrast with the sonnets of Taylor and Stoddard, those of Stedman, nine in number, written about 1897, show originality in subject matter. The serious nature of the thought of Stedman is represented by the following sonnet:

Mors Beneficia

Give me to die unwitting of the day,
And stricken in Life's brave heat, with senses clear:
Not swathed and couched until the lines appear
Of Death's wan mask upon this withering clay,
But as that old man eloquent made way

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[16] Stoddard's Complete Poems, p. 433.

[17] Ibid., p. 434.

From Earth, a nation's conclave hushed anear;
Or as the chief whose fates, that he may hear
The victory, one glorious moment stay.
Or, if not thus, then with no cry in vain,
No ministrant beside to ward and weep,
Hand upon helm I would my quittance gain
In some wild turmoil of the waters deep,
And sink content into a dreamless sleep
(Spared grave and shroud) below the ancient main.[18]

Through association with Taylor and Stoddard, Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836-1907) became a follower of Keats and a member of the group of poets devoted to external beauty, classicists in their reverence for rule and tradition, and in their struggle for perfection. Aldrich was, perhaps, most classical of them all. Unlike the other poets of this group, he wrote sonnets which were among his best poems. Before 1885 he wrote twenty-one sonnets, and afterward, twelve. He was influenced not only by the principles of the "School of Keats", but also by the French Petrarchists. Aldrich followed both Shakespearean and Petrarchan models. He expressed his poetic philosophy in this his best known sonnet:

Enamored Architect of Airy Rhyme

Enamored architect of airy rhyme,
Build as thou wilt, heed not what each man says:
Good souls, but innocent of dreamer's ways,
Will come, and marvel why thou wastest time;
Others, beholding how thy turrets climb
'Twixt theirs and heaven, will hate thee all thy days;
But most beware of those who come to praise.

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[18] Stedman's American Anthology, p. 338.

O Wondersmith, O worker in sublime
And heaven-sent dreams, let art be all in all;
Build as thou wilt, unspoiled by praise or blame,
Build as thou wilt, and as thy light is given;
Then, if at last the airy structure fall,
Dissolve, and vanish--take thyself no shame.
They fail, and they alone, who have not striven.[19]

This sonnet and others, Sleep, Outward Bound, The Undiscovered Country, and Invita Minerva, have scarcely been surpassed in American literature.[20]

Closely associated with Aldrich, only, was H. C. Bunner (1855-1896), who was likewise influenced by the French Petrarchists. Bunner wrote but few sonnets; from 1884 to 1892, only six, and during the next four years, only three. These sonnets express genuine feeling beneath the grace of form. In Leopold Damrosch, he combined lyric beauty with an experienced appreciation of music. The line, "That the heart leaped up to hear", interprets the emotion felt on hearing the music of Damrosch. The sonnet, Deaf, however, shows a somewhat artificial treatment of serious subject matter.

Contemporary with these poets of the New York school was a group of women, daughters of New England authors, who clung to the New England tradition in taking nature for their subject matter.

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19 Aldrich's Poetical Works, II., p. 142.
20 Pattee's History of American Literature since 1870, p. 135.

IV

New England Women Sonneteers

A group of daughters of New England writers, the first women sonneteers in America, carried forward sonnet-writing in and of New England after the tradition of Bryant. Among them were Helen Hunt Jackson (1831-1885), Louise Chandler Moulton (1835-1908), and Celia Thaxter (1835-1894). With the first two began an era of prolific sonneteering. From 1870 to 1885 Helen Hunt Jackson wrote one hundred and in 1889 Louise Chandler Moulton published one hundred thirty-three. Although they wrote profusely, they wrote, according to Professor Pattee's estimate, nothing worth while. However, Clarence Edmund Stedman named a few that were somewhat above the level of the others as notable; among them are Helen Hunt Jackson's Poppies in the Wheat, Morn, and Emigravit. Sonnets, representative of the best of Louise Chandler Moulton's, are Laura Sleeping, Hic Jacet, The Last Good-by, and Were but My Spirit Loosed upon the Air. These poems, while not greatly praised, have charm, are sweetly lyric, and quietly meditative.

The last named member of this group, Celia Thaxter,

wrote twelve sonnets, published in 1902, having music and nature for their themes. In The Sounding Sea she described the music of the sea as she heard it daily. In the poems, Beethoven, Mozart, and Mojeska, she wrote of her love for music. The sonnet, Mozart, is an expression of her admiration for the musician and of her love for music:

> Most beautiful among the helpers thou!
> All heaven's fresh air and sunshine at thy voice
> Flood with refreshment many a weary brow,
> And sad souls thrill with courage and rejoice
> To hear God's gospel of pure gladness sound
> So sure and clear in this bewildered world,
> Till the sick vapors that our sense confound
> By cheerful winds are into nothing whirled.
> O matchless melody! O perfect art!
> O lovely, lofty voice, unfaltering!
> O strong and radiant and divine Mozart,
> Among earth's benefactors crowned a king!
> Love shalt be while time may yet endure,
> Spirit of health, sweet, sound, and wise, and pure.[21]

In depth of feeling and sweetness of tone, her sonnets surpass somewhat those of Helen Hunt Jackson and Louise Chandler Moulton.

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A Miscellaneous Group of Eastern Sonnet-Writers

The poets of the miscellaneous group followed the tradition of the past in their study of English poetry,

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[21] Celia Thaxter's Poems, p. 72.

and wrote "poetry from poetry". George Henry Boker and Richard Watson Gilder were influenced chiefly by English sonneteers; Edith Thomas and Lloyd Mifflin, by both English and Grecian literature.

The sonnets of Boker (1823-1890) written before 1865, place him among the pioneers in the revival of the sonnet in American literature.[22] In 1866 he completed a sequence, containing three hundred thirteen sonnets, at that time the only sequence of love sonnets in America, in the Elizabethan sense of the word. He imitated Sidney and Petrarch both in form and in choice of subject matter; and the number of sonnets almost equals that of Petrarch who wrote three hundred seventeen. Boker wrote on Petrarch's theme of unrequited love, addressing two hundred eighty-two to one woman, and the last thirty-one to two other women.[23] He did not write the sequence for publication. In sonnet XC he wrote the following lines:

> I wonder if these sonnets which I sing
> To thee alone--our secret love's poor cheer,
> By any chance will reach the common ear,
> And feel the puncture of the critic's sting?[24]

The mood of philosophical melancholy prevails throughout.

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22 C. H. Grandall's Representative Sonnets by American Poets, p. 87.

23 E. C. Bradley's George Henry Boker, pp. 316, 318-19.

24 Boker's Sonnets, p. 62.

For beauty of thought and diction, Boker's earlier love sonnets are superior to this sequence.[25]

Although not as copious a writer as Boker, Richard Watson Gilder (1844-1909) displayed greater talent, winning for himself first place among the poets of this group. In contrast with the sonnets of the "School of Keats", those of Gilder have a message for the reader, and show that the author has an instinctive feeling for poetry. Gilder was imbued with the influence of Milton, who departed from Italian methods in the relation of the lines to the sentences. In Milton's sonnets, "the divisions of the meter and thoserequired by the thought are not brought into strict agreement; pauses occur in any part of any line; and a sentence is sometimes continued, in rapid and unbroken flow, from the second quatrain into the first tercet, the definite pause usually placed after the quatrains being disregarded."[26] Because Milton made this variation in the thought structure of the Petrarchan form, it has since been known as the "Miltonic" form. After this fashion, from 1875 to 1900, Gilder wrote one hundred five sonnets.

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25 Hunt's Book of the Sonnet, p. 62.

26 Smart's Sonnets of Milton, p. 27

Sharing the attitude of disapproval of the love theme found in the late Elizabethan age, Gilder expressed in the following sonnet his criticism of the subject:

IV--Written on a Fly-leaf of "Shakespeare's Sonnets."

When shall true love be love without alloy--
Shine free at last from sinful circumstance!
When shall the canker of unheavenly chance
Eat not the bud of that most heavenly joy!
When shall true love meet love not as a coy
Retreating light that leads a deathful dance,
But as a firm fixt fire that doth enhance
The beauty of all beauty! Will the employ
Of poets ever be too well to show
That mightiest love with sharpest pain doth writhe;
That underneath the fair, caressing glove
Hides evermore the iron hand; and tho'
Love's flower alone is good, if we would prove
Its perfect bloom, our breath slays like a scythe![27]

Another poet to influence Gilder was Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose translation of Vita Nuova interested him in the form and inspired him to compose the sonnets of The New Day.

In the Prelude to The Celestial Passion, Gilder is somewhat mystical in tone and coldly beautiful, as illustrated in the first quatrain:

O white and midnight sky! O starry bath!
Wash me in thy pure, heavenly, crystal flood;

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[27] Gilder's Complete Poems, p. 9.

Cleanse me, ye stars, from earthly soil and scath;
Let not one taint remain in spirit or blood!

and in the sestet:

O glittering host! O high angelic choir!
Silence each tone that with they music jars;
Fill me even as an urn with thy white fire
Till all I am is kindled with the stars! [28]

The excellent sonnet, On the Life-Mask of Abraham Lincoln, is strong in theme:

This bronze doth keep the very form and mold
Of our great martyr's face. Yes, this is he:
That brow all wisdom, all benignity;
That human, humorous mouth; those cheeks that hold
Like some harsh landscape all the summer's gold;
That spirit fit for sorrow, as the sea
For storms to beat on; the lone agony
Those silent, patient lips too well foretold.
Yes, this is he who ruled a world of men
As might some prophet of the elder day--
Brooding above the tempest and the fray
With deep-eyed thought and more than mortal ken.
A power was his beyond the touch of art
Or armed strength--his pure and might heart.[29]

Gilder's interest in English poetry is evidenced in these titles, Stratford Bells and In Wordsworth's Orchard.

Another copious sonneteer was Lloyd Mifflin (1846-1921), who wrote three hundred sonnets from 1874 to 1900. Although he penned so large a number, he called himself in To Richard Henry Stoddard an "Unheeded Singer of today."

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28 Gilder's Complete Poems, p. 41.

29 Ibid., p. 117.

This sonnet and one addressed to Longfellow were written in praise of American sonneteers, but nearly all the others were inspired by English or Grecian literature. The Longfellow sonnet illustrates Mifflin's most musical, flowing meter:

> Melodious Poet, on auspicious days
> When o'er thy chaste and polished pages bending,
> I read each sweet line to its golden ending,
> Bound am I by the fetters of thy lays.
> And as I follow every happy phrase--
> Music and beauty to thy matter lending--
> I seem to listen to a brooklet wending
> Its lyric journey over pebbly ways.
> Full oft thy verse sounds like a river flowing
> Through windy reed-lands to the distant lea;
> Anon, thy voice above the storm-cloud going,
> Peals as the sounding trumpets of the sea;
> Or, like some mediaeval clarion blowing
> From bannered turrets, rings out silverly.[30]

Mifflin's sonnet, The Last Song of Orpheus, is the only one written in America with a coda, which is a continuation of the sonnet after the usual fourteen lines, and which is composed of a half-line and a couplet. This shows the influence of Milton, who, in turn, had borrowed the form with the coda. Its most noted exponent was the Italian poet, Francesco Berni.[31] The following is the sestet and the coda, showing Mifflin's originality in its composition:

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[30] Mifflin's Collected Sonnets, p. 33.

[31] Smart's The Sonnets of Milton, p. 126-127.

The satyr pricked his goat-ears, wonderingly,
And dropped, atween his hoofs, his pipe of oat.
Bird, fish, and grove, moved to the melody
For the last time. On Hebrus, far afloat,
The soul of Orpheus, in one dulcet note
Passed, as his dead lips sang, Eu-ryd-i-ce!
Till listening mermaids in the Aegean Sea
Drew down the head, and sang with silver throat,
On rocks, and in sea-caves, the self-same note,--
Eu-ryd-i-ce!.....Eu-ryd-i-ce! [32]

In Mifflin's collection entitled, Echoes from Greek Idylls, there is a series of fifteen sonnets, telling the story of Europa and the Bull, a few lines of which are in dialogue. The following sonnets illustrate the quality of this series:

Europa and the Bull

VII

Then Zeus them seeing, changed himself at sight
Unto a bull, Europa's love to gain!
Not to such beast as in the burdened wain
Beneath the yoke still sweats in sorry plight,
Feeds in the stall, or from the dawn till night
Drags on the curved plough in toilful pain,--
Nay, but a bull of an immortal strain,
Whose more than human eye doth love incite.
His lordly body brightest chestnut shone;
A silver star was set within his brow;
His looks with soft desire did importune;
And from his foretop two branched horns were thrown,
As when a flake of cloud divides the bow
And leaves the two curves of the crescent moon.[33]

IX

He bowed himself before her sandaled feet
And bent his neck, and on the maiden gazed;

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[32] Mifflin's Collected Sonnets, p. 122.

[33] Ibid., p. 224.

While his great loins enticed her and amazed;
Then gently did she her fair maids entreat:
"Come, dear my playmates, make my joy complete,
Mount me upon the bull, and be not dazed,
For ne'er a beast in fair Phoenicia grazed,
So honest, mild, so gentle and discreet!"
Then on his back, secure, she smiling sat
And bade her rosy comrades follow too;
But from the ground great Zeus arose thereat--
Impelled by love's impetuosity--
And, though she waved despairing hands in rue,
On, like a dolphin, sped across the sea.[34]

In Professor Pattee's estimation, Lloyd Mifflin was a maker of beautiful and thoughtful sonnets.

Although she lived as far west as Ohio, Edith Thomas (1854-1925) was more Greek in spirit than American. From 1884 to 1893 she wrote eighty sonnets, the following one expressing something of her ideal:

On the Sonnet

Grant me twice seven splendid words, O Muse
(Like jewel pauses on a rosary chain,
To tell us where the aves start again);
Of these, in each verse, one I mean to use--
Like Theseus in the labyrinth-for clues
To help lost Fancy striving in the brain;
And, Muse, if thou wilt still so kindly deign,
Make my rhymes move by courtly twos and twos!
Oh, pardon, shades of Avon and Vaucluse,
This rush-light burning where your lamps yet shine!
A sonnet should be like the cygnet's cruise
On polished waters; or like smooth old wine,
Or earliest honey garnered in May dews!
And all be laid before some fair love's shrine![35]

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[34] Mifflin's Collected Sonnets, p. 226.

[35] Thomas' A New Year's Masque and Other Poems, p. 133.

The Bitter-Sweet of Spring is a series of five sonnets containing material from Greek literature, as illustrated in these lines:

> With pain of joy doth vernal nature thrill,
> And takes its mood, sad-memoried, soothed, or wild,
> From ever-changing moods of Ceres' child.[36]

And a sonnet which represents those on nature is the following:

Frost

> How small a tooth hath mined the season's heart!
> How cold a touch hath set the wood on fire,
> Until it blazes like a costly pyre
> Built for some Ganges emperor, old and swart,
> Soul-sped on clouds of incense! Whose the art
> That webs the streams, each morn, with silver wire,
> Delicate as the tension of a lyre,
> Whose falchion pries the chestnut-burr apart?
>
> It is the Frost, a rude and Gothic Sprite,
> Who doth unbuild the Summer's palaced wealth,
> And puts her dear loves all to sword or flight;
> Yet in the hushed, unmindful winter's night,
> The spoiler builds again with jealous stealth,
> And sets a mimic garden, cold and bright.[37]

Other sonnets of similar character are The Fountains of the Rain, The Return of Nature, and The Dread. For the precision in the selection and the arrangement of the words, the sonnets of Edith Thomas are not far below those of Gilder.

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[36] Thomas' Fair Shadow Land, p. 111.

[37] Thomas' A New Year's Masque and Other Poems, p. 121.

These four sonneteers, Boker, Gilder, Mifflin, and Edith Thomas, were important chiefly because they wrote such a large number of sonnets, six hundred ninety-eight in all, and because, after them, the spirit of the West began to influence the subject-matter of the sonnet and to displace classical themes, diction, and imagery.

VI

Late Eastern Sonneteers

Eastern writers were the important sonneteers of the decade closing with 1900. In comparison with those of the preceding decade, the sonnets of the later poets were few, but those few added distinction and richness. The earlier and more intellectual sonnets of Van Dyke, Markham, Sherman, and Woodberry, will be considered first; those of Howells, Hovey, and Robinson, because of being more realistic in tendency, second; and the classical ones of Santayana, last.

The first group, as will be seen, is an academic one. Henry Van Dyke (1852---) wrote twenty-five sonnets, but only four of them before 1900. Of these, two were under the title, Mercy for Armenia. In them he expressed his strong humanitarianism, his approval of the American

attitude toward the Near East. In the first one, The Turk's Way, he described the Turkish treatment of Armenia:

> Unto the prisoners and sick he gave
> New tortures, horrible without a name;
> Unto the thirsty, blood to drink; a sword
> Unto the hungry; with a robe of shame
> He clad the naked, making life abhorred.
> He saved by slaughter, and denied a grave.[38]

With this he contrasts in the second one the American attitude:

America's Way

> But thou, my country, though no fault be thine
> For that red horror far across the sea;
> Though not a tortured wretch can point to thee,
> And curse thee for the selfishness supine
> Of those great Powers that cowardly combine
> To shield the Turk in his iniquity;
> Yet, since thy hand is innocent and free,
> Rise thou, and show the world the way divine!
> Thou canst not break the oppressor's iron rod,
> But thou canst minister to the oppressed;
> Thou canst not loose the captive's heavy chain,
> But thou canst bind his wounds and sooth his pain.
> Armenia calls thee, Empire of the West,
> To play the Good Samaritan for God.[39]

The following poem is a personal expression of his feelings toward daily duty:

Work

> Let me but do my work from day to day,
> In field or forest, at the desk or loom,
> In roaring market-place or tranquil room;

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[38] Van Dyke's The Builders and Other Poems, p. 67.

[39] Ibid., p. 68.

Let me but find it in my heart to say,
When vagrant wishes beckon me astray,
"This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;
Of all who live, I am the one by whom
This work can best be done in the right way."
Then shall I see it not too great, nor small,
To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
Then shall I cheerful greet the laboring hours,
And cheerful turn, when the long shadows fall
At eventide, to play and love and rest,
Because I know for me my work is best.[40]

This is illustrative of a new theme, a subject belonging to every day life.

Edwin Markham (1852---) was, during many years of his life, a western poet, but later he moved to New York. He wrote ten sonnets, published in 1899, inspired by books, poets, and outdoor life. He expressed the spirit of God in nature in these words from The Butterfly:

Yes, knowing I love so well the flowery way,
He did not fling me to the world astray--
He did not drop me to the weary sand,
But bore me gently to a leafy land:
Tinting my wings, He gave me to the day.[41]

The following nature sonnet is outstanding for the personification of Death:

The Last Furrow

The Spirit of Earth, with still restoring hands,
'Mid ruin moves, in glimmering chasm gropes,

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40 Cooper's Poems of Today, p. 119.
41 Markham's The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems, p. 57.

And mosses mantle and the bright flower opes;
But Death the Ploughman wanders in all lands,
And to the last of Earth his furrow stands.
The grave is never hidden; fearful hopes
Follow the dead upon the fading slopes,
And there wild memories meet upon the sands.
When willows fling their banners to the plain,
When rumor of winds and sound of sudden showers
Disturb the dream of winter--all in vain
The grasses hurry to the graves, the flowers
Toss their wild torches on their windy towers;
Yet are the bleak graves lonely in the rain. [42]

This poem is characteristic of Markham's sonnets for its serious subject matter. That he was inspired by English poets is evident in the titles: The Lord of All (Milton), After Reading Shakespeare, and Keats A-Dying.

Frank Demster Sherman (1860-1916) began his sonnet-writing not long before 1900. From 1890 to 1904 he wrote only ten, one of which appeared in 1890, and the others in 1904. He was not original in subject matter, but chose familiar themes as illustrated by the following titles: Music, Surf Music, The Shower, and The Snow's Dreamer. The association of music and nature is characteristic of Sherman, as illustrated in the sonnet:

Music

In vain the quest: no mortal eyes may know
The secret haunt wherein by day and night

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[42] Markham's The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems, p. 47.

She shapes her dreams of audible delight
And sends them forth to wander to and fro;
Spirits of Sound, invisible they go
To fill the world with wonder in their flight;
Celestial voices, from whose starry height
Strange hints of song steal down to earth below.
Listen and hear the rhythmic echoes fall,--
The winds and waves and leaves and bees and birds,--
The blended harmony of reeds and strings,
Chorus and orchestra, - the voice and all
The miracle of melody and words,--
Music herself it is who dreams and sings! [43]

The beauty of this poem is found in the picture, the personification of music sending forth her dreams to wander over the earth to make all nature seem melodious.

The sonnets of George E. Woodberry (1855-1930) were, perhaps, more widely known than those of any other member of this group. He began his sonnet-writing in 1891; his ten sonnets of that year were thoughtful, philosophical, and finished in style; intellectual and ethical in tone rather than emotional. The high level of his work is seen in the two sonnets, At Gibraltar, at once intelligent and imaginative in their outlook on international matters. [44]

At Gibraltar

I

England, I stand on thy imperial ground,
Not all a stranger; as thy bugles blow,

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[43] Sherman's Lyrics of Joy, p. 86.

[44] Weinck's From Whitman to Sanburg in American Poetry, p. 98.

I feel within my blood old battles flow--
The blood whose ancient founts in thee are found.
Still surging dark against the Christian bound
Wide Islam presses; well its peoples know
Thy heights that watch them wandering below;
I think how Lucknow heard their gathering sound.
I turn, and meet the cruel, turbaned face.
England, 'tis sweet to be so much thy son!
I feel the conqueror in my blood and race;
Last night Trafalgar awed me, and today
Gibraltar wakened; hark the evening gun
Startles the desert over Africa!

II

Thou art the rock of empire set mid-seas
Between the East and West, that God has built;
Advance thy Roman borders when thou wilt,
While run thy armies true with His decrees;
Law, justice, liberty-great gifts are these;
Watch that they spread where English blood is spilt,
Lest, mixed and sullied with his country's quilt,
The soldier's life-stream flow, and Heaven displease!
Two swords there are: one naked, apt to smite,
Thy blade of war; and, battle-storied, one
Rejoices in the sheath, and hides from light.
American I am; would wars were done!
Now westward, look, my country bids good-night--
Peace to the world from ports without a gun! [45]

These two poems, At Gibraltar, represent, perhaps, as fine an achievement as can be found in Mr. Woodberry's work. For American sonnets, they are superior in "strength, passion, and idealty". [46]

Somewhat apart from the preceding group of sonnet-writers, because of individuality in the choice of subject

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[45] Woodberry's Poems, p. 3.

[46] Rittenhouse's Younger American Poets, p. 210.

matter and in style, were Howells, Hovey, and Robinson. The sonnet in their hands took on new life and freshness.

Like other poets of the last decade, William Dean Howells (1837-1920) wrote few sonnets, but those few were noteworthy. Although Howells was chiefly a novelist, from 1887 to 1900 he wrote ten sonnets, among them being Change and Vision; the latter illustrating his essentially truthful and realistic treatment of life. The theme is an ordinary picture of life; in the octave of the poem he presents a picture of a squalid, impoverished home, and in the sestet he contrasts it with that of a mansion.

Vision

Within a poor man's squalid home I stood:
The one bare chamber, where his work-worn wife
Above the stove and wash-tub passed her life,
Next the sty where they slept with all their brood.
But I saw not that sunless, breathless lair,
The chamber's sagging roof and reeking floor;
The smeared walls, broken sash, and battered door;
The foulness and forelornness everywhere.
I saw a great house with the portals wide
Upon a banquet room, and, from without,
The guests descending in a brilliant line
By the stair's statued niches, and beside
The loveliest of the gemmed and silken rout
The poor man's landlord leading down to dine.[47]

Very different from other sonneteers of the last

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[47] Stedman's An American Anthology, p. 387.

decade was Richard Hovey (1864-1900), whose poetry was spontaneous and original. "He is a singer of men", says Professor Pattee, "of Western men, red-blooded and free. He could make even so conventional a thing as a sonnet a thing with which to stir the blood."[48] An illustration of this vigorous manner is found in Love in the Winds:

> When I am standing on a mountain crest,
> Or hold the tiller in the dashing spray,
> My love of you leaps foaming in my breast,
> Shouts with the winds and sweeps to their foray;
> My heart bounds with the horses of the sea,
> And plunges in the wild ride of the night,
> Flaunts in the teeth of tempest the large glee
> That rides out Fate and welcomes gods to fight.
> Ho, love, I laugh aloud for love of you,
> Glad that our love is fellow to rough weather,--
> No fretful orchid hot housed from the dew,
> But hale and hardy as the highland heather,
> Rejoicing in the wind that stings and thrills,
> Comrade of ocean, playmate of the hills.[49]

Perhaps no other native sonnet in American poetry is comparable with Hovey's Love in the Winds in its expression of exuberant joy in contact with nature. Like this sonnet, but somewhat more vigorous, is Faith and Fate in which Hovey imitated in words and meter the sound of a galloping horse.

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[48] Pattee's History of American Literature since 1870, p. 351.

[49] Hovey's Along the Trail, p. 28.

Faith and Fate

To horse, my dear, and out into the night!
Stirrup and saddle and away, away!
Into the darkness, into the affright,
Into the unknown on our trackless way!
Past bridge and town missiled with flying feet,
Into the wilderness our riding thrills;
The gallop echoes through the startled street,
And shrieks like laughter in the demoned hills;
Things come to meet us with fantastic frown,
And hurry past with maniac despair;
Death from the stars looks ominously down--
Ho, ho, the dauntless riding that we dare!
East, to the dawn, or west or south or north!
Loose rein upon the neck of Fate--and forth! [50]

Much less vigorous in spirit than his other sonnets is After Business Hours, which Hovey wrote in a quieter mood; here he did not interpret life in a spirit of exuberant joy, but of rest and consolation in solitude:

When I sit down with thee at last alone,
Shut out the wrangle of the clashing day,
The scrape of petty jars that fret and fray,
The snarl and yelp of brute beasts for a bone;
When thou and I sit down at last alone,
And through the dusk of rooms divinely gray
Spirit to spirit finds its voiceless way,
As tone melts meeting in accordant tone,--
Oh, then our souls, far in the vast of sky,
Look from a tower, too high for sound of strife
Or any violation of the town,
Where the great vacant winds of God go by,
And over the huge misshapen city of life
Love pours his silence and his moonlight down. [51]

The spiritual side of Hovey's life is revealed in the following lines from The Thought of Her:

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[50] Hovey's Along the Trail, p. 29.

[51] Ibid., p. 27.

Suddenly I am still and thou art there,
A viewless visitant and unbesought,
And all my thinking trembles into nought,
And all my being opens like a prayer.[52]

Hovey was, in a measure, influenced by Whitman in the sonnet, World and Poet, in which there are echoes of a line of Whitman's poetry, "I hear America singing."

World and Poet

"Sing to us, Poet, for our hearts are broken;
Sing us a song of happy, happy love,
Sing of the joy that words leave all unspoken,--
The lilt and laughter of life, oh sing thereof!
Oh, sing of life, for all are sick and dying;
Oh, sing of joy, for all our joy is dead;
Oh, sing of laughter, for we know but sighing;
Oh, sing of kissing, for we kill instead!"
How should he sing of happy love, I pray,
Who drank love's cup of anguish long ago?
How should he sing of life and joy and day,
Who whispers Death to end his night of woe?
And yet the Poet took his lyre and sang,
Till all the dales with happy echoes rang.[53]

Hovey was a "later Lanier" in his feeling of nationalism as he expressed in the following sonnet:

America

We come to birth in battle; when we pass,
It shall be to the thunder of the drums.
We are not one that weeps and saith Alas,
Nor one that dreams of dim millenniums.

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[52] Hovey's Along the Trail, p. 28.

[53] Ibid., p. 92.

> Our hand is set to this world's business,
> And it must be accomplished workmanly;
> Be we not stout enough to keep our place,
> What profits it the world that we be free?
> Not with despite for others, but to hold
> Our station in the world inviolate,
> We keep the stomach of the men of old
> Who built in blood the bastions of our fate.
> We know not to what goal God's purpose tends;
> We know He works through battle to His ends.[54]

Hovey's sonnets are American in spirit, expressing a vigor, a joy, and an optimism not often found in other sonnets of the day. The sonnets which have been named show a distinctive singing quality.

Another poet to show originality and individuality in the choice and treatment of subject matter was Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869---), who began to write sonnets in 1883 and continued his work after 1900. Of the entire number, sixty-one, thirty-one were written before 1900. Following a tradition, Robinson also expressed in The Sonnet his attitude toward the form:

> The master and the slave go hand in hand,
> Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave,
> And there be kings do sorrowfully crave
> The joyance that a scullion may command.
> But, ah, the sonnet-slave must understand
> The mission of his bondage, or the grave

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[54] Hovey's Along the Trail, p. 17.

May clasp his bones, or ever he shall save
The perfect word that is the poet's wand.
The sonnet is a crown, whereof the rhymes
Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones;
But shapes and echoes that are never done
Will haunt the workshop, as regret sometimes
Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones
The crash of battles that are never won. 55

Another expression of his personal ideal is the following poem addressed to his friends:

Dear Friends

Dear Friends, reproach me not for what I do,
Nor counsel me, nor pity me; nor say
That I am wearing half my life away
For bubble-work that only fools pursue.
And if my bubbles be too small for you,
Blow bigger then your own: the games we play
To fill the frittered minutes of a day,
Good glasses are to read the spirit through.
And whoso reads may get him some shrewd skill;
And some unprofitable scorn resign,
To praise the very thing that he deplores;
So, friends (dear friends), remember, if you will,
The shame I win for singing is all mine,
The gold I miss for dreaming is all yours. 56

In the following lines from the poem, George Crabbe, he told of an influence on his poetic career:

Whether or not we read him we can feel
From time to time the vigor of his name
Against us like a finger for the shame
And emptiness of what our souls reveal
In books that are as altars where we kneel
To consecrate the flicker, not the flame. 57

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55 Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 95.

56 Ibid., p. 83.

57 Ibid., p. 94.

That Robinson was influenced by Thomas Hardy, another realist, has often been pointed out.[58] Like Hardy he wrote poems packed with thought, and some of Hardy's psychological realism is reflected in Robinson's work.

Robinson was interested in the treatment of human character, types of which he introduced in his sonnets. For example, the characters treated in Aaron Stark and Cliff Klingenhagen, were misfits in society, having distorted views of life. These two characters and others were "imaginary",[59] yet suggested by the immediate life around him, for whom he created a place in which they could live the drama of their lives. Nowhere else in sonnet poetry can be found such portraits as these of pathetic failures who lack understanding.

Aaron Stark

Withal a meagre man was Aaron Stark,
Cursed and unkempt, shrewd, shrivelled, and morose.
A miser was he, with a miser's nose,
And eyes like little dollars in the dark.
His thin, pinched mouth was nothing but a mark;
And when he spoke there came like sullen blows
Through scattered fange a few gnarled words and close,
As if a cur were chary of its bark.
Glad for the murmur of his hard renown,
Year after year he shambled through the town,
A loveless exile moving with a staff;

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58 Van Doren's American and British Literature since 1890, p. 14.

59 Redman's Modern American Writers. Edwin Arlington Robinson, p. 14.

And oftentimes there crept into his ears
A sound of alien pity, touched with tears,--
And then (and only then) did Aaron laugh.[60]

In that last line, Robinson revealed the tragedy of a lifetime in the cynical laugh of Aaron Stark, for his soul had hardened until it was like a dollar. A somewhat different impression of life was made on Cliff Klingenhagen, who was happy despite the tragedy and bitterness that he had experienced.

Cliff Klingenhagen

Cliff Klingenhagen had me in to dine
With him one day; and after soup and meat,
And all the other things there were to eat,
Cliff took two glasses and filled one with wine
And one with wormwood. Then, without a sign
For me to choose at all, he took the draught
Of bitterness himself, and lightly quaffed
It off, and said the other one was mine.
And when I asked him what the deuce he meant
By doing that, he only looked at me
And smiled, and said it was a way of his.
And though I know the fellow, I have spent
Long time a-wondering when I shall be
As happy as Cliff Klingenhagen is.[61]

It must be noticed that at the start Robinson eliminated from his verse conventional poetic vocabulary, yet he made use of poetic artifices when he needed them. In The Pity of the Leaves it can be seen that he selected words having "o" and "k" sounds for the purpose of creating

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[60] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 86.

[61] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 87.

a dreary, despairing effect:

> Vengeful across the cold November moors,
> Loud with ancestral shame there came the bleak
> Sad wind that shrieked, and answered with a shriek,
> Reverberant through lonely corridors.[62]

The sharp sounds that help to create winter atmosphere are also in these lines from the same poem:

> The brown, thin leaves that on the stoves outside
> Skipped with a freezing whisper.[62]

with these words, leaving a dismal, haunting effect:

> but if the old man cried,
> They fluttered off like withered souls of men.[62]

Another line, which is an illustration of Robinson's ghost-like unreality, is from the sonnet, The Dead Village:

> Now there is nothing but the ghosts of things.[63]

Robinson described characters in his sonnets, but most of them he did not name. In The Clerks he described the minds of several at the same time:

> Tiering the same dull webs of discontent,
> Clipping the same sad alnage of the years.[64]

And in Thomas Hood he wrote:

> The man who cloaked his bitterness within
> This winding-sheet of puns and pleasantries,

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[62] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 85.

[63] Ibid., p. 88.

[64] Ibid., p. 90.

God never gave to look with common eyes
Upon a world of anguish and of sin.[65]

These lines from The Tavern present another of Robinson's portraits:

We only know
That once long after midnight, years ago,
A stranger galloped up from Tilbury Town
Who brushed, and scared, and all but overran
That skirt-crazed reprobate, John Evereldown.[66]

In all these sonnets Robinson portrayed failures in life, lives of those who had not planted in their gardens what they wished to enjoy but found often what was the reward, as indicated in these lines from The Gardens:

And in that riot of sad weeds I found
The fruitage of a life that was my own.[67]

And in the poem, On the Night of a Friends's Wedding, Robinson wrote of the thoughts of a character:

If ever I am old, and all alone,
I shall have killed one grief, at any rate;
For then, thank God, I shall not have to wait
Much longer for the sheaves that I have sown.
The devil only knows what I have done.[68]

Perhaps the following description from the poem, Supremacy, will sufficiently illustrate Robinson's gloomy cast of mind:

There is a drear and lonely tract of hell

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[65] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 91.
[66] Ibid., p. 93.
[67] Ibid., p. 86.
[68] Ibid., p. 95.

From all the common gloom removed afar:
A flat, sad land it is, where shadows are,
Whose lorn estate my verse may never tell.[69]

However dreary, hopeless, and pessimistic were many of Robinson's sonnets in his interpretation of life, a few show life ideally, life more hopeful and full of promise. In striking contrast with all that has been mentioned in the subject matter of Calvary:

Friendless and faint, with martyred steps and slow,
Faint for the flesh, but for the spirit free,
Stung by the mob that came to see the show,
The Master toiled along to Calvary:[70]

And in the sestet he concluded with these lines:

Ah, when shall come love's courage to be strong!
Tell me, O Lord--tell me, O Lord how long
Are we to keep Christ writhing on the cross![70]

In the sonnet, The Altar, Robinson wrote these lines:

Alone, remote, nor witting where I went,
I found an altar builded in a dream,--

and also,

Alas! I said,--the world is in the wrong.[71]

The same idea Robinson stated in other words, "That people were trying to spell God with the wrong blocks."

The last lines from Credo again voice the ideal in life:

No, there is not a glimmer, nor a call,

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69 Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 97.
70 Ibid., p. 83.
71 Ibid., p. 92.

For one that welcomes, welcomes when he fears,
The black and awful chaos of the night;
For through it all--above, beyond it all--
I know the far-sent message of the years,
I feel the coming glory of the light.[72]

Finally, Robinson seems to explain the reason for his mistrust of humanity; he believes that God is to be found in Nature rather than in man. This he sums up in the following poem:

When we can all so excellently give
The measure of love's wisdom with a blow,--
Why can we not in turn receive it so,
And end this murmur for the life we live?
And when we do so frantically strive
To win strange faith, why do we shun to know
That in love's elemented ever-glow
God's wholeness gleams with light superlative?
Oh, brother men, if you have eyes at all,
Look at a branch, a bird, a child, a rose,
Or anything God ever made that grows,--
Nor let the smallest vision of it slip,
Till you may read, as on Belshazzar's wall,
The glory of eternal partnership.[73]

Robinson is a new poet with a new message, speaking through an old form. Here is a poet who turned the sonnet to the purposes of psychological realism, and fashioned sonnets as though a thousand sonneteers had not preceded him. Though his sonnets do not form the best part of his work, they do reflect, in part, the literary qualities of his best poetry that has entitled

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[72] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 94.
[73] Robinson's Collected Sonnets, p. 96.

him to his high place among living poets.

In the following sonnet, he eloquently voices the need of his generation:

Sonnet

Oh for a poet--for a beacon bright
To rift this changeless glimmer of dead gray;
To spirit back the Muses, long astray,
And flush Parnassus with a newer light;
To put these little sonnet-men to flight
Who fashion, in a shrewd mechanic way,
Songs without souls, that flicker for a day,
To vanish in irrevocable night.
What does it mean, this barren age of ours?
Here are the men, the women, and the flowers,
The seasons, and the sunset as before.
What does it mean? Shall there not one arise
To wrench one banner from the western skies,
And mark it with his name forevermore?[74]

Somewhat apart from the other sonneteers of the period and entirely different in his thinking, was George Santayana (1863---), who reflected in his own sonnets his life and mind--sensitive, thoughtful, spiritual, and a little sad.[75] He followed his master philosopher, Aristotle,[76] closely in spirit though not in words or literary form, and wove into his sonnets, in a mystical style, his philosophy of the beauty of

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[74] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 93.

[75] Weirick's From Whitman to Sandburg in American Poetry, p. 125.

[76] Cambridge History of American Literature, p. 259.

nature. Santayana's sonnet-writing extended from 1883 to 1895. "Emotion recollected in tranquillity" perfectly defines the work of George Santayana.[77] His best work consists of a sequence of fifty sonnets. Twenty of these are philosophical and belong to the period from 1883 to 1893; the last thirty are upon love and were written before 1895. In his work there is no evidence that he is living in America in the twentieth century; he has withdrawn from this world into one which is entirely subjective. The evidence for this is his own testimony:

> I sought on earth a garden of delight,
> Or island altar to the Sea and Air,
> Where gentle music were accounted prayer,
> And reason, veiled, performed the happy rite.[78]

That he was alone in his own sphere, he revealed in the following sonnet; as stated in the lines here underlined:

XIV

> There may be chaos still around the world,
> This little world that in my thinking lies;
> For mine own bosom is the paradise
> Where all my life's fair visions are unfurled.
> Within my nature's shell I slumber curled,
> Unmindful of the changing outer skies,
> Where now, perchance, some new-born Eros flies,
> Or some old Cronos from his throne is hurled.

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[77] Rittenhouse's Younger American Poets, p. 94.

[78] Santayana's Poems, p. 3.

I heed them not; or if the subtle night
Haunt me with deities I never saw,
I soon mine eyelids drowsy curtain draw
To hide their myriad faces from my sight.
They threat in vain; the whirlwind cannot awe
A happy snow-flake dancing in the flaw.[79]

That he desired solitude for his world of contemplation is clearly shown in the following poem:

XV

A wall, a wall to hem the azure sphere,
And hedge me in from the disconsolate hills!
Give me but one of all the mountain rills,
Enough of ocean in its voice I hear.
Come no profane insatiate mortal near
With the contagion of his passionate ills;
The smoke of battle all the valleys fills,
Let the eternal sunlight greet me here.
This spot is sacred to the deeper soul
And to the piety that mocks no more.
In nature's inmost heart is no uproar,
None in this shrine; in peace the heavens roll,
In peace the slow tides pulse from shore to shore,
And ancient quiet broods from pole to pole.[80]

The thought of the following passage is somewhat elusive:

Even such a dream I dream, and know full well
My waking passeth like a midnight spell,
But know not if my dreaming breaketh through
Into the deeps of heaven and of hell.
I know but this of all I would I knew:
Truth is a dream, unless my dream is true.[81]

but in the last line Santayana concludes that truth is

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79 Santayana's Poems, p. 16.

80 Ibid., p. 17.

81 Ibid., p. 7.

subjective, unless the subjective world becomes reality.

The union of human and heavenly love is a favorite theme with Santayana, as expressed in the line, underlined below:[82]

XXXV

We needs must be divided in the tomb,
For I would die among the hills of Spain,
And o'er the treeless melancholy plain
Await the coming of the final gloom.
But thou--O pitiful!--wilt find scant room
Among thy kindred by the northern main,
And fade into the drifting mist again,
The hemlocks' shadow, or the pines' perfume.
Let gallants lie beside their ladies' dust,
In one cold grave, with mortal love inurned;
Let the sea part our ashes, if it must.
The souls fled thence which love immortal burned,
For there were wedded without bond of lust,
And nothing of our heart to earth returned.[83]

In the following poem Santayana expresses the hope that he found in nature:

XXIX

What riches have you that you deem me poor,
Or what large comfort that you call me sad?
Tell me what makesyou so exceeding glad:
Is your earth happy or your heaven sure?
I hope for heaven, since the stars endure
And bring such tidings as our fathers had.
I know no deeper doubt to make me mad,
I need no brighter love to keep me pure.

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82 These lines I have underlined, in Santayana's sonnets, to aid in the interpretation of Santayana's philosophy.

83 Santayana's Poems, p. 39.

To me the faiths of old are daily bread;
I bless their hope, I bless their will to save,
And my deep heart still meaneth what they said.
It makes me happy that the soul is brave,
And, being so much kinsman to the dead,
I walk contented to the peopled grave.[84]

Most other poets would have stressed the emotional in the following sonnet; but Santayana, steeped in the classics and disciplined according to Greek ideals, was, as usual, philosophical:

XLIV

For thee the sun doth daily rise, and set
Behind the curtain of the hills of sleep,
And my soul, passing through the nether deep
Broods on thy love, and never can forget.
For thee the garlands of the woods are wet,
For thee the daisies up the meadow's sweep
Stir in the sidelong light, and for thee weep
The drooping ferns above the violet.
For thee the labour of my studious ease
I ply with hope, for thee all pleasures please,
Thy sweetness doth the bread of sorrow leaven;
And from thy noble lips and heart of gold
I drink the comfort of the faiths of old,
And thy perfection is my proof of heaven.[85]

In this sonnet, Santayana voiced the Greek philosophy as to soul life, and expressed a quiet appreciation of the perfection of nature.

The first twenty of Santayana's sonnets are more purely philosophical; the last thirty are written upon love, though tinged with Aristotelian thought. As to

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84 Santayana's Poems, p. 33.
85 Ibid., p. 48.

beauty, the sequence upon love is perhaps more finished and more artistic.

Besides those already named, Santayana wrote eleven sonnets on miscellaneous subjects, all from a philosophical point of view. The mysticism of his sonnet sequence again appears in the first part of On the Death of a Metaphysian:

> Unhappy dreamer, who outwinged in flight
> The pleasant region of the things I love,
> And soared beyond the sunshine, and above
> The golden cornfields and the dear and bright
> Warmth of the hearth-----[86]

On a Piece of Tapestry has a different theme. The poet has described the beauty of color:

> Nothing in nature purposely is fair,--
> Her beauties in their freedom disagree;
> But here all vivid dyes that garish be,
> To that tint mellowed which the sense will bear,
> Glow, and not wound the eye that, resting there,
> Lingers to feed its gentle ecstasy.[87]

In the sonnet form, Santayana found a medium whose classic distinction so harmonized with the nature and mode of his thought that it seemed almost a predestined expression. His sonnets show his use of English, pure and finished. One criticism of Santayana's sonnets is that they are "faultily faultless"; they are so finished that

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[86] Santayana's Poems, p. 58.
[87] Ibid., p. 59.

one would welcome a false note now and then.[88] They are pleasing with a Petrarchan grace and sweetness, and with a mystical idealism that reveals to us the dreamy aloofness of the author. They could have been produced at any time or place between 1865 and 1900, for they do not reflect the influence of current literary movements. He is a master of the sonnet form; his sonnets are rich in beauty, artistic finish, and classical thought.

The decade closing with 1900 was important in American literature because of the large number of meritorious sonnets produced, the variety of their styles, the wide scope of their subject matter, and the number of important authors who contributed sonnets. Next to Santayana in importance are Robinson and Hovey, whose individuality makes for them a high place among the sonnet writers of America.

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[88] Rittenhouse's Younger American Poets, p. 104.

Chapter III

SONNET-WRITERS OF THE WEST AND SOUTH

I

Western Sonneteers

The western poets were, for the most part, original and unstudied in their sonnet-writing. They were not poets of beauty, without a message; they wrote about first-hand material taken from life around them. In harmony with these simple subjects they used a simple, natural diction in place of the highly poetic language often found in the sonnet. The chief poets of the West considered in this study are Sill and Riley.

The older of these two was Edward Rowland Sill (1841-1887), a poet of the far West. From 1867 to 1872 he wrote five sonnets; from 1872 to 1880, seven. That his themes were personal and dealt with the realm of the spirit is illustrated by the following sonnet:

The Book of Hours

As one who reads a tale writ in a tongue
He only partly knows,--runs over it
And follows but the story, losing wit
And charm, and half the subtle links among
The haps and harms that the book's folk beset,--
So do we with our life. Night comes, and morn:
I know that one has died and one is born;
That this by love and that by hate is met.

But all the grace and glory of it fail
To touch me, and the meanings they unfold.
The Spirit of the World hath told the tale,
And tells it! and 'tis very wise and old.
But o'er the page there is a mist and veil;
I do not know the tongue in which 'tis told.[1]

The theme in To a Face at a Concert is one which is familiar to many people:

When the low music makes a dusk of sound
About us, and the viol or far-off horn
Swells out above it like a wind forlorn,
That wanders seeking something never found,
What phantom in your brain, on what dim ground,
Traces its shadowy lines?[2]

Several sonnets have been written about the sonnet, but Sill expressed a new idea in his poem, The Agile Sonneteer:

How facile 'tis to frame the sonnet! See:
An "apt alliteration" at the start;
Phrase fanciful, turned t'other-end-to with art;
And then a rhyme makes first and fourth agree.
Ee words enough--so this next quatrain we
Will therefore rhyme to match. Here sometimes "heart"
Comes in, as "hot" or "throbbing" to import
A tang of sentiment to our idee.
Then the sextette, wherein there strictly ought
To be a kind of winding up of things;
Only two rhymes (to have it nicely wrought)
On which it settles, lark-like, as it sings.
And so 'tis perfect, head and tail and wings.
"Lacks something?" Oh, as usual, but a thought.[3]

Aside from showing cleverness and deft workmanship, this sonnet suggests a thorough familiarity with the more serious problems of verse-writing.

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1 Sill's Poems, I, p. 98.
2 Ibid., I, p. 84.
3 Sill's Poetical Works, p. 386.

The sonnet, Living, was written from a personal point of view:

Living

"Today," I thought, "I will not plan nor strive;
Idle as yon blue sky, or clouds that go
Like loitering ships, with sails as white as snow,
I simply will be glad to be alive".
For, year by year, in steady summer glow
The flowers had bloomed, and life had stored its hive,
But tasted not the honey. Quite to thrive,
The flavor of my thrift I now would know.
But the good breeze blew in a friend--a boon
At any hour. There was a book to show,
A gift to take, a slender one to give.
The morning passed to mellow afternoon,
And that to twilight; it was sleep-time soon,--
And lo! again I had forgot to live.[4]

This shows the reflective nature of Sill's subject matter. Again, At Dawn was also written from a personal experience. He began with these lines:

I lay awake and listened, ere the light
Began to whiten at the window-pane.

And at last he said:

"Morning is coming, fresh and clear, and blue,"
Said that bright song; and then I thought of you.[5]

These poems and others show the spirit of Sill's sonnets, alive with a new message, written spontaneously about his musings on nature.

Representative of the spirit of the Middle West was

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[4] Sill's Poems, II, p. 76.

[5] Ibid., II, p. 98.

James Whitcomb Riley (1853-1916), who expressed his individuality with greater freedom than did Sill in the choice of subject matter. Unlike Sill, Riley wrote abundantly. From 1876 to 1900 he wrote seventy-eight sonnets, some of them about the everyday life of rural America. His subjects were home life, farm life, old times, and childhood. He did not limit his utterances to subjects which were polite or proper and to language which was smooth and decorous. Riley wrote sonnets both in conventional English and in the dialect of Indiana. He expressed a somewhat naive view of poetry in the following poem:

The Ginoine Ar-tickle

Talkin' o' poetry,--There're a few men yit
'At's got the stuff boiled down so's it'll pour
Out sorgum-like, and keeps a year and more,
Jes' sweeter ever'time you tackle it!
Why, all the jinglin' truck 'at has been writ
Fer twenty year and better is so pore
You cain't find no sap in it any more
'N you'd find juice in puff-balls!--AND I'D QUIT!
What people wants is facts, I apperhend;
And naked Natur is the thing to give
Your writin' bottom, eh? And I contend
'At honest work is allus bound to live.
Now them's my views; 'cause you kin recommend
Sich poetry as that from end to end.[6]

Another sonnet in which Riley wrote Hoosier dialect is A Full Harvest, and one in which he used negro dialect

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[6] Riley's Complete Works, II, p. 134.

is Brudder Sims.

The following sonnet shows Riley's more conventional language:

When She Comes Home

When she comes home again! A thousand ways
I fashion, to myself, the tenderness
Of my glad welcome: I shall tremble--yes;
And touch her, as when first in the old days
I touched her girlish hand, nor dared upraise
Mine eyes, such was my faint heart's sweet distress
Then silence: and the perfume of her dress:
The room will sway a little, and a haze
Cloy eyesight--soul-sight, even--for a space;
And tears--yes; and the ache here in the throat,
To know that I so ill deserve the place
Her arms make for me; and the sobbing note
I stay with kisses, ere the tearful face
Again is hidden in the old embrace.[7]

The most dignified of Riley's sonnets is the following:

Lord Bacon

Master of masters in the days of yore,
When art met insult, with no law's redress;
When Law itself insulted Righteousness,
And Ignorance thine own scholastic lore,
And thou thine own judicial office more,--
What master living now canst love thee less,
Seeing thou didst thy greatest art repress
And leave the years its riches to restore
To us, thy long neglectors. Yield us grace
To make becoming recompense, and dawn
On us thy poet-smile; nor let us trace,
In fancy, where the old-world myths have gone,
The shade of Shakespeare, with averted face,
Withdrawn to uttermost oblivion.[8]

A sonnet about a subject reminiscent of classical poetry

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[7] Riley's Complete Works, III, p. 394.

[8] Ibid., III, p. 230.

is as follows:

Sleep

Thou drowsy god, whose blurred eyes, half awink,
Muse on me,--drifting out upon thy dreams,
I lave my soul as in enchanted streams
Where reveling satyrs pipe along the brink,
And, tipsy with the melody they drink,
Uplift their dangling hooves and down the beams
Of sunshine dance like motes. Thy languor seems
An ocean-depth of love wherein I sink
Like some fond Argonaut, right willingly,--
Because of wooing eyes upturned to mine,
And siren-arms that coil their sorcery
About my neck, with kisses so divine,
The heavens reel above me, and the sea
Swallows and licks its wet lips over me.[9]

And one that is typical of Riley's Farm-Rhymes is the poem:

A Voice From the Farm

It is my dream to have you here with me,
Out of the heated city's dust and din--
Here where the colts have room to gambol in,
And kine to graze, in clover to the knee.
I want to see your wan face happily
Lit with the wholesome smiles that have not been
In use since the old games you used to win
When we pitched horseshoes: And I want to be
At utter loaf with you in this dim land
Of grove and meadow, while the crickets make
Our own talk tedious, and the bat wields
His bulky flight, as we cease converse and
In a dusk like velvet smoothly take
Our way toward home across the dewy fields.[10]

Riley interpreted the pathos of childhood in a series of

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[9] Riley's Complete Works, II, p. 123.

[10] Ibid., III, p. 426.

three sonnets entitled:

When Old Jack Died

III

When Old Jack died, it seemd to us, some way,
That all the other dogs in town were pained
With our bereavement, and some that were chained,
Even, unslipped their collars on that day
To visit Jack in state, as though to pay
A last, sad tribute there, while neighbors craned
Their heads above the high board fence, and deigned
To sigh "Poor Dog!" remembering how they
Had cuffed him, when alive, perchance, because,
For love of them he leaped to lick their hands--
Now, that he could not, were they satisfied?
We children thought that, as we crossed his paws,
And o'er his grave, 'way down the bottom-lands,
Wrote "Our First Love Lies Here," when Old Jack died.[11]

Other titles found among Riley's sonnets are June, Night, Mother Goose, To the Cricket, The Country Editor, When June is Here, Longfellow, Old Chums, and many more. Although he departed far from the traditional subject matter of the sonnet,using seemingly unpoetic material, he employed the Petrarchan form. Riley was an ingenious author of the homely sentiments of rural Americans.

Another sonneteer of the Middle West was Paul Lawrence Dunbar (1872-1906), the only negro poet of his day who wrote any sonnets of importance. From 1895 to 1899 he wrote nine sonnets, and after 1899 he added a

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[11] Riley's Complete Works, III, p. 398.

few more to his small collection. In Douglass, he expressed his gratitude to the great negro leader for having helped him in poverty; and in Harriet Beecher Stowe he voiced the praise of the negro race for her labors in the cause of slavery.

Harriet Beecher Stowe

She told the story, and the whole world wept
At wrongs and cruelties it had not known
But for this fearless woman's voice alone.
She spoke to consciences that long had slept:
Her message, Freedom's clear reveille, swept
From heedless hovel to complacent throne.
Command and prophecy were in the tone
And from its sheath the sword of justice leapt.
Around two peoples swelled a fiery wave,
But both came forth transfigured from the flame.
Blest be the hand that dared be strong to save,
And blest be she who in our weakness came--
Prophet and priestess! At one stroke she gave
A race to freedom and herself to fame.[12]

In another sonnet he praised an outstanding leader of his own race:

Booker T. Washington

The word is writ that he who runs may read.
What is the passing breath of earthly fame?
But to snatch glory from the hands of blame--
That is to be, to live, to strive indeed.
A poor Virginia cabin gave the seed,
And from its dark and lowly door there came
A peer of princes in the world's acclaim,
A master spirit for the nation's need.
Strong, silent, purposeful beyond his kind,
The mark of rugged force on brow and lip,

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12 Dunbar's Complete Poems, p. 119.

Straight on he goes, nor turns to look behind
Where hot the hounds come baying at his hip;
With one idea foremost in his mind,
Like the keen prow of some on-forging ship.[13]

And in Slow Through the Dark he wrote of Booker T. Washington's ambition for his race:

Slow moves the pageant of a climbing race;
Their footsteps drag far, far below the height,
And, unprevailing by their utmost might,
Seen faltering downward from each hard won place.
No strange, swift-sprung exception we; we trace
A devious way thro' dim, uncertain light,--
Our hope, through the lost vistaed years, a sight
Of that our Captain's soul sees face to face.
Who, faithless, faltering that the road is steep,
Now raiseth up his drear insistent cry?
Who stoppeth here to spend a while in sleep
Or curseth that the storm obscures the sky?
Heed not the darkness round you, dull and deep;
The clouds grow thickest when the summit's nigh.[14]

These sonnets and others of Dunbar are significant for their lyrical qualities and the expression of the feeling and thought of the negro race.

II

Southern Sonneteers

In the hands of the poets of the South, the sonnet was melodious and colorful, as was all poetry of the South. A feeling of ecstasy was reflected to a degree not found in any of the sonnets of the West.

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[13] Dunbar's Complete Poems, p. 209.

[14] Ibid., p. 211.

Many were written on the natural beauties in the South, showing a genuine appreciation for the cotton-fields, the pine woods, and the southern shore.

The chief southern poet was Lanier. Others were Hayne, Cawein, Margaret Preston, and Lizette Woodworth Reese.

The earliest and most prolific sonneteer of this group was Paul Hamilton Hayne (1830-1886), ranking not far below Longfellow. Hayne was contemporary with Bayard Taylor and his group and was, like Stoddard, a devotee of Keats and Tennyson, and "a maker of poetry full of grace and often of real melody, but with little originality either of manner or message."[15] Before the war he was a graceful writer of a few sonnets, but from 1865 to 1886 he produced seventy-five, of which many show a tender love of nature, a profusion of figurative language, and a gentle air of meditation. Nature at Ease illustrates the melodic beauty of many of Hayne's sonnets:

> What wondrous secrets bless the spiritual ear,
> Born, as it were, of music winged with light,
> Sweeter than those strange songs which Orpheus gave
> To earth and heaven, while both grew dumb to hear![16]

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[15] Pattee's American Literature since 1870, p. 272.

[16] Hayne's Complete Poems, p. 262.

In sonnet XI: Earth Odors--After Rain Hayne makes felt the sensuous beauty of nature, as does Keats in his poem, Ode to the Nightingale. Sonnet XII shows Hayne's spirit of meditation:

> I lay in dusky solitude reclined,
> The shadow of sleep just hovering o'er mine eyes,
> When from the cloudland in the western skies
> Rose the strange breathings of a tremulous wind.[17]

Another poem, Laocoon, is picturesque and meditative in spirit:

Laocoon

> A gnarled and massive oak log, shapeless, old,
> Hewed down of late from yonder hillside gray,
> Grotesquely curved, across our hearthstone lay;
> About it, serpent-wise, the red flames rolled
> In writhing convolutions; fold on fold
> They crept and clung with slow portentous sway
> Of deadly coils; or in malignant play,
> Keen tongues outflashed, 'twixt vaporous gloom and gold.
> Lo! as I gazed, from out that flaming gyre
> There loomed a wild, weird image, all astrain
> With strangled limbs, hot brow, and eyeballs dire,
> Big with the anguish of the bursting brain:
> Laocoon's form, Laocoon's fateful pain,
> A frescoed dream on flickering walls of fire![18]

The nature sonnets are among his best poems, suggesting Keats' imagery of sense in the colorful words, "rainbow" and "sunray"; and the transparent, evanescent quality of Shelley, intimated in the meaning and connotation of

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[17] Hayne's Complete Poems, p. 260.

[18] Ibid., p. 257.

"ethereal", "phantom", and "wavering hues", and in the animated spirit of nature in song. The following sestet from The Phantom-Song is illustrative:

> Ethereal, as the wavering hues that start
> From chorded rainbows;--lingering scarce so long
> As the last sun-ray flashed in twilight's eye,
> I hail this phantom of a perfect song:--
> And I, some day, shall pass the phantom by,--
> To feel the embodied music next my heart.[19]

Sidney Lanier (1842-1881) was not only a chief poet of his day but also a major poet in American literature. Although he did not do his best work in his sonnets, twenty-one in number, which appeared in 1887, they reflect his best literary characteristics. In The Mocking Bird, for example, he wrote about a sweet-singer who "summ'd the woods in song":

> Superb and sole, upon a plumed spray
> That o'er the general leafage boldly grew,
> He summ'd the woods in song; or typic drew
> The watch of hungry hawks, the lone dismay
> Of languid doves when long their lovers stray,
> And all birds' passion-plays that sprinkle dew
> At morn in brake or bosky avenue.
> Whate'er birds did or dreamed, this bird could say.
> Then down he shot, bounced airily along
> The sward, twitched in a grasshopper, made song
> Midflight, perched, prinked, and to his art again.
> Sweet Science, this large riddle read me plain:
> How may the death of that dull insect be
> The life of yon trim Shakespere on the tree?[20]

In addition to this poem, he wrote a series of three

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19 Hayne's Complete Poems, p. 267.

20 Lanier's Poems, p. 27.

To Our Mocking-Bird (Died of a Cat, May, 1878). In many lines he strikingly describes the music of the bird:

> Contralto cadences of grave desire,
> Tissues of moonlight shot with songs of fire;
> Bright drops of time from oceans infinite
> Of melody.[21]

and in the following lines he continued his vivid description of the bird's song:

> Methinks I hear thy silver whistlings bright
> Mix with the mighty discourse of the wise,
> 'Till broad Beethoven, deaf no more, and Keats,
> 'Midst of much talk, uplift their smiling eyes,
> And mark the music of thy wood-conceits.[22]

Lanier was equally great as poet and musician, and expressed his love for music in many of his sonnets, as in lines from Ona Palmetto:

> 'Tis shredded into music down the shades;
> All sea-breaths, land breaths, systol, diastol,
> Sway, minstrels of that grief-melodious Soul.[23]

The following lines from sonnet IV of a series, In Absence, show his reverence for God as well as his love for music:

> He at his lady's feet
> Lays worship that to heaven alone belongs;
> Yea, swings the incense that for God is meet
> In flippant censers of light lover's songs.[24]

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[21] Lanier's Poems, p. 103.

[22] Ibid., p. 104.

[23] Ibid., p. 153.

[24] Ibid., p. 75.

A line from sonnet II conveys a musical quality in both thought and words:

That bank our singing rivulets of rhyme.[25]

Again Lanier tells of music in To Nannette Folk-Auerbach, written first in German and later translated into English:

> Oft as I hear thee, wrapt in heavenly art,
> The massive message of Beethoven tell
> With thy ten fingers to the people's heart
> As if ten tongues told news of heaven and hell.[26]

The depth of feeling and thought in these sonnets show that Lanier rose above conventions and looked at life. That he stood for a new Americanism is exemplified in this poem, Psalm of the West, containing eight sonnets, expressing the exultant joy felt by the men on Columbus' ship. Many of the lines here are heavy with thought and intense with feeling. The following is the concluding one of the series:

Columbus

> "I marvel how mine eye, ranging the Night,
> From its big circling ever absently
> Returns, thou large low Star, to fix on thee.
> Maria! Star? No star: a Light, a Light!
> Woulds't leap ashore, Heart? Yonder burns - a Light.
> Pedro Gutierrez, wake! come up to me.
> I prithee stand and gaze about the sea:
> What seest? Admiral, like as Land - a Light!

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25 Lanier's Poems, p. 72.

26 Ibid., p. 102.

Well! Sanchez of Segovia, come and try:
What seest? Admiral, naught but sea and sky!
Well! But I saw It. Wait! the Pinta's gun!
Why, look, 'tis dawn, the land is clear: 'tis done!
Two dawns do break at once from Time's full hand--
God's East--mine, West: good friends, behold my Land!" [27]

The depth of thought and feeling and the beauty of diction of Lanier's sonnets give them a place among the best written in America.

Somewhat like Lanier in his singing quality was Madison Cawein (1865-1914). In his fourteen sonnets written about 1887 and 1898, Cawein shows himself to be a contemplative nature poet, a careful observer of nature. One of his word pictures is shown in the following poem:

The End of Summer

Pods are the poppies, and slim spires of pods
The hollyhocks; the balsam's pearly bredes
Of rose-stained snow are little sacs of seeds
Callapsing at a touch; the lote, that sods.
The pond with green, has changed its flowers to rods
And discs of vesicles; and all the weeds,
Around the sleepy water and its reeds,
Are one white smoke of seeded silk that nods.
Summer is dead, ay me! Sweet Summer's dead!
The sunset clouds have built her funeral pyre,
Through which, e'en now, runs subterranean fire:
While from the East, as from a garden bed,
Mist-vined, the Dusk lifts her broad moon-like some
Great golden melon--saying, "Fall has come." [28]

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[27] Lanier's Poems, p. 126.

[28] Cawein's A Voice on the Wind, p. 63.

Cawein's nature sonnets are his best. Light and Wind represents his most delicately fanciful, graceful, and melodious work. His use of onomatopolia and alliteration is very effective, as in these words, "multitudinous waves" and "mermaid--murmuring sighs."

Light and Wind

Where, through the leaves of myriad forest trees,
The daylight falls, beryl and chrysoprase,
The glamour and the glimmer of its rays
Seem visible music, tangible melodies:
Light that is music; music that one sees--
Wagernian music--where forever sways
The spirit of romance, and gods and fays
Take form, clad on with dreams and mysteries.
And now the wind's transmuting necromance
Touches the light and makes it fall and rise,
Vocal, a harp of multitudinous waves
That speaks as ocean speaks--an utterance
of far-off whispers, mermaid--murmuring sighs--
Pelagian, vast, deep-down in coral caves.[29]

In luxuriance of imagery and in richness of appeal to the senses, Cawein, rather than Timrod, was the "Keats of the South".

Contemporary with Bayard Taylor, and likewise a "poet of the past", was Margaret Preston (1820-1897). Before 1890 she wrote a few sonnets; in 1890 appeared five, which are Petrarchan in form, and which have themes suggested to her through literature. The sonnet, "Sit, Jessica" is a reproduction of a scene from The

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[29] Cawein's A Voice on the Wind, p. 64.

Merchant of Venice. In another one, she portrayed excellently a well-known American author:

Hawthorne

He stood apart - but as a mountain stands
In isolate repose above the plain,
Robed in no pride of aspect, no disdain,
Though clothed in power to steep the sunniest lands
In mystic shadow. At the wood's demands,
Himself he clouded, till no eye could gain
The vanished peak; no more, with sense astrain
Than trace a footprint on the surf-washed sands.
Yet, hidden within that rare, sequestered height,
Imperially lonely, what a world
Of splendor lay! What pathless realms untrod!
What rush and wreck of passion! What delight
Of woodland sweets! What weird winds, phantom-whirled!
And over all, the immaculate sky of God.[30]

The sonnets of Lizette Woodworth Reese (1856---) were among the latest of those of southern poets produced in 1890. In 1887 she published twelve, and soon after, a few more. Her work is exquisite and serene; and, in general, is characterized by appropriate words and melodious rhythm. The singing note in the sonnet, The Old Path is Miss Reese's natural expression:

O Love! O Love! this way has hints of you
In every bough that stirs, in every bee,
Yellow and glad, droning the thick grass through,
In blooms red on the bush, white on the tree;
And when the wind, just now, came soft and fleet,
Scattering the blackberry blossoms, and from some
Fast darkening space that thrush sang sudden sweet,
You were so near, so near, yet did not come!

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30 Crandall's Representative Sonnets by American Poets, p. 258.

Say, is it thus with you, O friend, this day?
Have you, for me that love you, thought or word?
Do I, with bud or bough pass by your way;
With any breath of brier or note of bird?
If this I knew, though you be quick or dead,
All my sad life would I go comforted.[31]

She wrote many sonnets about nature, and a few about life. A feminine tenderness pervades her sonnets, and especially is it true in her most famous poem, Tears:

When I consider Life and its few years--
A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun;
A call to battle, and the battle done
Ere the last echo dies within our ears;
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;
The burst of music down an unlistening street--
I wonder at the idleness of tears.
Ye old, old dead, and ye of yesternight,
Chieftains, and bards, and keepers of the sheep,
By every cup of sorrow that you had,
Loose me from tears, and make me see aright
How each hath back what once he stayed to weep-
Homer his sight, David his little lad![32]

A distinguishing feature of the sonnets of the West and of the South is the large part played by natural scenery. In Riley's sonnets it is in the description of the country sights, as the harvest field; but in those of Hayne, Lanier, and Cawein, it is in the pictures of southern foliage, landscape scenes, woodlands, flowers, birds and clouds. Lanier associates music with his nature themes, interpreting the melody of the South.

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[31] Rittenhouse's Younger American Poets, p. 39.
[32] Stedman's An American Anthology, p. 610.

Chapter IV

THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE SONNET

The choice of the subject by American sonneteers has naturally depended largely on the influences which have affected the poets. In general, it may be said that the foreign influences on the sonnet in America are as follows: (1) the sonnets of Petrarch; (2) the work of a few of the French poets; and (3) most important of all, the poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, and other English poets.

The influence of the French poets and of Petrarch is sometimes difficult to trace. We know, however, that Aldrich, Bunner, Howells, and others read French; and, hence, it is reasonable to assume that a French influence was exerted upon them. As for the influence of Petrarch, that was unquestionably greater still, although it was not to be measured exactly. This is plainly evident in the extensive use of the form of the sonnet established by Petrarch and in the subject matter of the sonnet sequence of Boker.

In addition to European influences, mention should be made also of the probable influence of American poets

of the early part of the century--in particular, Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, Timrod, Hayne, and Taylor, all of whom wrote sonnets before 1865. It is a well-known fact that they were read by the later poets of their country.

From these foreign sources and the American poets of the early nineteenth century, the sonneteers after 1865 borrowed many themes. From Petrarch they borrowed the theme, the misery of the lover. From Shakespeare and Milton they borrowed subjects such as the power of love and of friendship, and the beauty of nature; and, from all their predecessors in writing sonnets, they usually inherited the convention of a serious theme and an elevated tone.

To be more specific, it is worth while to point out what the various sonneteers after 1865 wrote about and how they group themselves in regard to the choice of subject matter.

To begin with, only one poet, Boker, wrote exclusively on the original subject of the sonnet, that of unrequited love. Both Gilder and Santayana wrote upon love, but from a different point of view. They wrote on the love of man and woman, spiritual love, immortal love,

and the eternity of love. In the sonnet, Love in the Winds, Hovey associated love and nature, expressing ecstasy.

There was a large group who wrote frequently on nature, the subject of a large number of American sonnets. Poets wrote of the finer aspects of nature, described natural scenery, pointed out the beauties of the sky, sun, clouds, and stars, and interpreted the music in nature. Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, Helen Hunt Jackson, Louise Chandler Moulton, and Celia Thaxter wrote of the finer aspects of the nature of New England. Hayne, Cawein, Lanier, and Lizette Woodworth Reese described the natural scenery of the South, while Riley and Sill pointed out the chief characteristics of the country scenes of the West. Although the pictures of nature found in most of the sonnets are accurate, yet it is apparent that many have been suggested by the conventional nature scenes in older poetry. This seems to be true of the sonnets of Gilder, Mifflin, Edith Thomas, and Santayana. Love of the sea is the central theme of these sonnets: A Summer by the Sea, by Longfellow; Surf Music, by Sherman; The Sounding Sea, by Celia Thaxter; and Outward Bound, by Aldrich.

Again, a fairly large group of the sonneteers took an obvious delight in discussing the problems of the poet and the poetical world. A few of the poets wrote about the sonnet itself. Aldrich analyzed the poetic qualities of the sonnet in Enamored Architect of Airy Rhyme; Mifflin, its melody in The Sonnet's Music; and Gilder, its outstanding characteristics in The Sonnet. A number of sonnets were written in praise of older poets, from Chaucer on. Poets who wrote of Shakespeare are Longfellow, Gilder, Aldrich, and Markham; those who took Milton for their subject are Longfellow, Mifflin, and Markham. In addition to these English poets, Chaucer, Wordsworth, Keats, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Browning, and Tennyson have been commonly used for subjects. Of the American poets Longfellow was praised by Gilder, Mifflin, and Riley. A group of poets penned a few sonnets in praise of each other. Aldrich, Stedman, Stoddard, and Hayne admired Taylor and, consequently, wrote sonnets entitled, To Bayard Taylor. Stedman addressed a sonnet to Henry Van Dyke; Stoddard, one to Edmund Clarence Stedman; and Taylor, one to George H. Boker. Margaret Preston, interested in the literary fame of Hawthorne, wrote a

sonnet entitled, Hawthorne.

A fourth theme popular with sonneteers was that of music, for which naturally poets have expressed their deepest feeling and appreciation. Lowell, Celia Thaxter, and Hovey wrote of their admiration and understanding of the music of Beethoven. The sonnets, The 'Cello and The Violin, are expressions of Gilder's interest in music. Other sonneteers who took music for their subjects are Longfellow, Lowell, Sherman, Aldrich, Bunner, Louise Moulton, and Riley. Lanier embodied in his poetry his feeling for music in making the rhythm of his poetry correspond to that of music. This musical quality is found in his sonnet, To a Mocking-Bird.

Still another theme used by a number of sonnet-writers was American history and great men of America. This is illustrated by the sonnets, The Battlefield Gettysburg, by Mifflin, and Fredericksburg, by Aldrich. The greatness of Lincoln was lauded in sonnets by Gilder, Stedman, and Stoddard. Tribute to Columbus was paid by Lanier in the sonnets of the poem, Psalm of the West, and by Woodberry in his sonnet, On a Portrait of Columbus. Hovey interpreted the spirit of a loyal American in his

sonnet, America.

For the most part, the subject matter was selected for its weight and nobility of thought. Many sonneteers chose sublime subjects because these subjects were usually associated with the dignity of the form. That this tradition was not always followed, however, is evident in the sonnets of Van Dyke, Howells, Hovey, and Robinson. In the poem, Work, Van Dyke expressed his feeling for his daily occupation; in the sonnet, Vision, Howells presented the picture of a home having squalid surroundings; and Hovey, in his sonnet, After Business Hours, described the confusion of a day's work followed by the peace of a quiet home. As realistic as the subjects just mentioned, but new among the sonnets of America, are the characterizations given in Robinson's sonnets in which temperament and character, and career and destiny, are combined in a unified and revealing portrait. This type of sonnet is in Aaron Stark and a number of others. The nature of all this subject matter indicates that Van Dyke, Howells, Hovey, and Robinson turned to the realities of life for their poetic material.

Most of the sonnets were conventional; only a few

had new and realistic themes. The subject that was used the largest number of times was nature. It was used largely by the poets of the East and the South, and occasionally by those of the West. Many aspects of nature have inspired poets to write; for example, there are the sea, birds, and trees. Many poets are influenced in their moods by the passing of seasons.

Music and poetry, along with musicians and poets, have been subjects of many sonnets. About as many, also, have been written on love. Add to these the sonnets on events and men, important in the history of America, home, death, sleep, and God, and the bit is almost complete. Of the remaining sonnets not included in the foregoing classification, most are on topics of a personal kind.

This survey of the subject matter of the seventeen hundred sonnets included in this study shows that a wide comprehensiveness of interest is an outstanding feature of the sonnet poetry in America. It shows also that the influence on the poets in selecting subjects for their sonnets can be attributed largely to the individuality, to the education, to the environment of the poet, and to the literary influences of the period in which he lived.

Chapter V

FORM AND STYLE

What is a sonnet? 'Tis the pearly shell
That murmurs of the far-off murmuring sea;
A previous jewel carved most curiously;
It is a little picture painted well.
What is a sonnet? 'Tis the tear that fell
From a great poet's hidden ecstasy;
A two-edged sword, a star, a song--ah me!
Sometimes a heavy-tolling funeral bell.
This was the flame that shook with Dante's breath;
The solemn organ whereon Milton played,
And the clear glass where Shakespeare's shadow falls:
A sea this is--beware who ventureth!
For like a fiord the narrow floor is laid
Mid-ocean deep sheer to the mountain walls.

- Richard Watson Gilder

I

From 1865 to 1900, the sonnet-writers of America followed either the Italian form, set by Petrarch and known as Petrarchan; or the English sonnet, fashioned by Shakespeare and called Shakespearean. The modern sonnet remains, with few exceptions, loyal to the scheme of Petrarch or to that of Shakespeare.

Historically, Petrarch was the one who first arranged the mechanical structure of the sonnet, giving it the regular rhyme-scheme, abba abba, having only two rhymes to the octave, but having variations of two or three rhymes in the sestet, and conforming the internal thought

development to the natural divisions, octave and sestet. "If it were a regular sonnet, it should have a clear and unified theme, stated in the first quatrain, developed in the second, confirmed or regarded from a new point of view in the first tercet, and concluded in the second tercet." [1]

With reference to the manner of developing the thought, there are three distinct methods. "The sonnet may, as the Petrarchan sonnet usually does, begin and grow to a climax at the end of the eighth line, closing quietly through the following six lines in a natural sequence of thought." [2] The following translation from Petrarch illustrates the rhyme arrangement and the thought divisions of the normal Italian type:

> On wings of thought I soared to regions where
> She whom I seek, but here on earth in vain,
> Dwells among those who the third heaven gain,
> And saw her lovelier and less haughty there.
> She took my hand and said, "In this bright sphere,
> Unless my wish deceive, we meet again:
> Lo! I am she who gave thee strife and pain,
> And closed my day before the eve was near.
> My bliss no human thought can understand;
> I wait for thee alone--my fleshly veil,
> So loved by thee, is by the grave retained."
> She ceased, ah why! and why let loose my hand!
> Such chaste and tender words could so prevail,
> A little more, I had in heaven remained. [3]

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[1] Lockwood's Sonnets, p. VIII.

[2] Ibid., p. VIII.

[3] Quoted from Tomlinson's The Sonnet, p. 5.

For having condensed thought pathetically and even majestically expressed, the three hundred thirteenth sonnet of Petrarch has been referred to by some critics, English and Italian, as the finest of his sonnets:

I still lament, with tears, the years gone by,
Wasted in loving but a mortal thing;
Though I could soar, not rising on the wing,
To lofty work, which might perchance not die.
O Thou! who knowest my impiety,
Invisible, immortal, heavenly King!
To my frail wand'ring soul some succour bring,
And its defects of Thy own grace supply.
Though tempest-toss'd and oft in strife I be,
At peace, in port, let me my life resign,
Though spent in vain, yet close in piety:
In that short span of life I yet call mine,
And in death's hour extend Thy hand to me;
Thou know'st I trust no other aid but Thine. [4]

These two sonnets represent the mechanical structure of the greater part of Petrarch's sonnets. Of his three hundred and seventeen sonnets, one hundred and sixteen belong to what is termed the normal Italian type, which has the rhyme arrangement cde cde in the sestet; and one hundred and seven, to the second type, which has the rhyme scheme cd cd cd in the sestet. The remaining ninety-four show variations of the rhyme pattern of the sestet. [5]

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[4] Quoted from Tomlinson's The Sonnet, p. 31.
[5] Quoted from Tomlinson's The Sonnet, p. 3.

In the second place, the meaning in the sonnet may be presented by three different statements of the idea, which is the way Shakespeare builds his sonnets, and close with a two line application, conclusion, or proof.[6] The Shakespearean form has the rhyme-scheme, abab dede ef ef g g, the arrangement of which governs the internal thought divisions. In the following sonnet, Shakespeare follows his "favorite device of a threefold statement of his central thought, using a different image in each quatrain, and closing with a personal application of the idea:"[7]

CXVI

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

In the Shakespearean form the distinction between the octave and the sestet disappeared, and the final

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[6] Lockwood's Sonnets, p. VIII.

[7] Perry's A Study of Poetry, p. 294.

couplet gives an epigrammatic summary which Petrarch was particular to avoid.

In the third place, "the meaning in the sonnet may run over from the octave into the sestet, and the break come, if there is any break at all, later in the poem. Milton was the first to construct sonnets according to this third plan."[8] Milton's famous sonnet shows the reconstruction of the internal thought arrangement of the Petrarchan form:

On His Blindness

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

"Wordsworth defended Milton's frequent practice of letting the thought of the octave over-flow somewhat into the sestet, believing it 'to aid in giving that pervading sense of intense unity in which the excellence of the sonnet has always seemed to me mainly to consist."[9]

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8 Lockwood's Sonnets, p. VIII.

9 Perry's A Study of Poetry, p. 297.

Because Milton first used this plan of the thought structure, it has since been known as the Miltonic sonnet.

The sonnets of Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Milton are important here because they have been the source of inspiration of many American poets, and because they have been imitated by some, strictly, and by others, with variations. Thus, the form being set, the style of the sonnet is wherent in the expression of the nature of the poet; that is, it is in his feelings, thoughts, and spirit worked up by the imagination; and then woven into language, the words of which must be adequate to convey the full meaning, and must be carefully selected and arranged according to underlying principles of rhyme, rhythm, and metre. The art of the sonnet lies in what the poet "has put in" and what use he has made of the form. One can analyze a sonnet to point out the peculiar characteristics of a poet in his selection and arrangement of words, the kind of imagery, the nature of the thought, the quality of feeling, his individual treatment of the theme, and the use of the form; "but it must be borne in mind that any attempt to analyze the charm of a poem, or to explain the mysterious

interaction of thought and feeling and imagination that produces it, is waste of time." [10] Another important aspect of the sonnet is its music, which Mifflin described in the following sonnet:

The Sonnet's Music

Still harken for the Sonnet's hidden chime
As on the shore we list the sea-voiced shells;
The veiled music of the sonnet-swells
Should, in our song's cathedral nave sublime,
Roll down those rich reverberating halls
In soft antiphonies of recurrent rhyme.
Such tones were his who yet the ear enthralls--
Sonorous Singer of the Italian prime.
So Echo to Narcissus calls and calls
Among the grottoes of Arcadian fells;
At evening so, o'er cloud-built castle walls,
Faint--from far towers of airy citadels
Through deeps of twilight--rises floats and falls
The sweet re-echo of ethereal bells. [11]

With reference to style, the sonnets of American authors from 1865-1900 may be classified according to the manner in which the poets have expressed themselves within the limits of the form. Their outstanding literary characteristics cause them to fall into two classes: those which reflect the poetic qualities of the sonnets of the past, and those which radiate individuality in the original use of the form.

The first of these classes is, as should be expected,

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10 Hallam's An Approach to Poetry, p. 161.
11 Mifflin's Collected Sonnets, p. 164.

much the larger of the two. In it are numbered the following poets, considered in the large: Boker, Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, Helen Hunt Jackson, Louise Chandler Moulton, Celia Thaxter, Lizette Woodworth Reese, Sherman, Markham, Van Dyke, Woodberry, Mifflin, Gilder, Edith Thomas, Santayana, Margaret Preston, Taylor, Stoddard, Stedman, Aldrich, and Bunner. In the second class--that is the class of sonneteers who are individual or added something to the sonnet-- are Lanier, Van Dyke, Sill, Riley, Dunbar, Howells, Hovey, and Robinson. For the sake of convenience here, the two classes will be considered separately.

SONNETEERS FOLLOWING ESTABLISHED TRADITIONS

It is, perhaps, most logical to begin with the poets who used consistently or fairly consistently the Petrarchan form. Of these Boker, only, used the Petrarchan form for a sonnet sequence on unrequited love. This sequence is an imitation of Sidney's Astrophel and Stella, dealing with love in a very personal and emotional manner, and in almost every conceivable mood. Whether the situations are real or imaginative, there is a strong reality in the emotions and a depth of feeling in the treatment that makes for vitality and

sincerity. Although many of Boker's sonnets are uneven in quality, a great majority are strictly Petrarchan in form, imbued with a vigorous imagination, and reveal a strong sense of the poetical situation. His philosophy is prevailing melancholy.

II

The sonnets of the early New England poets were studied and polished; they were imitations of the sonnets of Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Milton with regard to regularity of verse. The Romantic Movement had reached its height, but under its waning influence Bryant, Longfellow, and Lowell wrote their sonnets.

Bryant was influenced by Wordsworth whose nature sonnets he seemed to imitate with regard to form. Wordsworth added a third rhyme to the quatrains of the Petrarchan form; Bryant wrote with similar irregularity, as seen in the sonnet, To Cole, The Painter Departing for Europe, the rhyme of which is abba cddc effe gg. A similar irregularity occurs in an early sonnet, October, having the plan abba cddc effe gg. Within the form the lines are metrically smooth.

Longfellow wrote the sonnets in praise of Dante's Divina Commedia in his most dignified manner, using ex-

tremely long and unmusical words, but minutely appropriate to the idea to be conveyed. This is true in the following lines:

> The loud vociferations of the street
> Become an undistinguishable roar.

The words "vociferations" and "undistinguishable" suggest the clamor of the street in their lack of rhythm, hard sounds, and meaning. Again, in the closing tercet of the same sonnet, it is true:

> The tumult of the time disconsolate
> The inarticulate murmurs die away
> While the eternal ages watch and wait.[12]

The words "tumult", "disconsolate", and "inarticulate" are heavy with thought and suggest discord. The sound of "m" in murmurs is soothing and suggests, along with the meaning, the dying away of sound. It is noticeable that Longfellow uses a variety of long and short words to clearly express his very definite ideas.

The sonnet, A Summer Day by the Sea, presents a lighter mood than is expressed in the one in praise of the Divina Commedia. Short words having "u", "e", "a", and "o" prevail, and contrasting with these monosyllabic words are such words as "lighthouse", "street-lamps",

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[12] Longfellow's Complete Poetical Works, p. 292.

and "summer". The consonants "m" and "n" appear repeatedly, suggesting the serene music of the sea. The theme is worked out in an imaginative manner and enriched by the use of metaphors. A feeling of subdued ecstasy is suggested by the sound of "t" to express the effect of nature's gladness. The metre and rhythm flow melodiously; pauses in the rhythm occur at the end of each line. Longfellow does not view nature objectively and let his imagination play upon his thought; but studies it subjectively, letting his theme be a reflection of his own heart and soul life. The form is strictly Petrarchan, showing skill in subduing substance to its limitations.

A Summer Day by the Sea

The sun is set; and in his latest beams
Yon little cloud of ashen gray and gold,
Slowly upon the amber air unrolled,
The falling mantle of the Prophet seems.
From the dim headlands many a lighthouse gleams,
The street-lamps of the ocean; and behold,
O'erhead the banners of the night unfold;
The day hath passed into the land of dreams.
O summer day beside the joyous sea!
O summer day so wonderful and white,
So full of gladness and so full of pain!
Forever and forever shalt thou be
To some the gravestone of a dead delight,
To some the landmark of a new domain.[13]

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[13] Longfellow's Complete Poetical Works, p. 316.

Lowell asserted his individuality in language and thought rather than beauty of sounds and emotion of poetry. He took for his sonnet such words as "conscience", "redoubles","helpless", and "dumb", which do not have beautiful sounds, poetic connotation, and artistic associations; but they are appropriate to the theme for meaning. They are intended to convey deep thought and to prolong the time of the rhythm to intensify the value of the theme, sombre and dignified. This is true in the sonnet, Nightwatches:

> While the slow clock, as they were miser's gold,
> Counts and recounts the mornward steps of Time,
> The darkness thrills with conscience of each crime
> By Death committed, daily grown more bold,
> Once more the list of all my wrongs is told,
> And ghostly hands stretch to me from my prime
> Helpless farewells, as from an alien clime;
> For each new loss redoubles all the old.
> This morn 'twas May; the blossoms were astir
> With southern wind; but now the boughs are bent
> With snow instead of birds, and all things freeze.
> How much of all my past is dumb with her;
> And of my future, too, for with her went
> Half of that world I ever cared to please. [14]

The movement of the poem is stately. The sounds of "l", "o", "r", and "n" are prolonged in pronunciation, showing a vivid contrast with the effect of the vowel sounds in the line from Bryant's November:

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[14] Lowell's Poetical Works, IV, p. 186.

Yet one smile more, departing distant sun![15]

These words seem to dance. Bryant interprets melody and gladness in nature; Lowell adapts his words to suit a serious theme with regard to metre, rhythm, and sense. The imagination is expressed in the personification of the clock.

Following in the tradition of New England nature poets were Helen Hunt Jackson, Louise Chandler Moulton, Celia Thaxter, and Lizette Woodworth Reese. Their sonnets relating to nature are effeminate in tone and usually delicate in theme; they show simplicity in style and diction. With the exception of a few variations, these women adhered to the form with regularity.

Typical of the style of the sonnets of Helen Hunt Jackson are October, Tides, and Poppies in the Wheat, the last one being colorful in picture and movement. Mazinni is more sombre in tone than most of Helen Hunt Jackson's sonnets:

> That he is dead the sons of kings are glad;
> And in their beds the tyrants sounder sleep.
> Now he is dead his martyrdom will reap
> Late harvests of the palms it should have had
> In life. Too late the tardy lands are sad.
> His unclaimed crown in secret they will keep
> For ages, while in chains they vainly weep,

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[15] Bryant's Poetical Works, p. 99.

And vainly grope to find the roads he bade
Them take. O Glorious soul! there is no dearth
Of worlds. There must be many better worth
Thy presence and thy leadership than this.
No doubt, on some great sun today, thy birth
Is for a race, the dawn of Freedom's bliss,
Which but for thee it might for ages miss.[16]

The poet has chosen a subject which does not stir one's feelings, and has treated it without using poetic artifices. The sounds and meaning of the words are dignified, suggesting a feeling of solemnity. The sonnet is characterized by run-on lines; each line has a sort of hinge upon which it turns, emphasizing the flow of metre. The metrical, grammatical, and rhythmical pauses harmonize. The form is a variation of the Petrarchan form, having the rhyme scheme, c c d c d d in the sestet and the Miltonic inner thought structure.

For its simplicity of style The Sounding of the Sea by Celia Thaxter is noteworthy:

As happy dwellers by the seaside hear
In every pause the sea's mysterious sound,
The infinite murmur, solemn and profound,
Incessant, filling all the atmosphere,
Even so I hear you, for you do surround
My newly-waking life, and break for aye
About the viewless shores, till they resound
With echoes of God's greatness night and day,
Refreshed and glad I feel the full flood-tide
Fill every inlet of my waiting soul;
Long striving, eager hope, beyond control,

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16 Helen H. Jackson's Poems, p. 55.

For help and strength at last is satisfied;
And you exalt me, like the sounding sea,
With ceaseless whispers of eternity.[17]

The last two lines present the musical quality of Celia Thaxter's verse, the music of which seems to imitate the rise and fall of the waves. The melody lies in the selection and graceful arrangement of many monosyllabic words.

In the poem, Tears, Lizette Woodworth Reese displays her style which has an exquisite and serene distinction. Her feminine tenderness is a pervading power in her best sonnets, and particularly in her famous sonnet, Tears:

When I consider Life and its few years--
A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun;
A call to battle, and the battle done
Ere the last echo dies within our ears
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;
The burst of music down an unlistening street,--
I wonder at the idleness of tears.
Ye old, old dead, and ye of yesternight,
Chieftans, and bards, and keepers of the sheep,
By every cup of sorrow that you had,
Loose me from tears, and make me see aright
How each has back what once he stayed to weep:
Homer his sight, David his little lad! [18]

The theme centers around life and its ultimate problems, apparently covering the span of a life time in a figurative way. The poem is composed of words which have

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[17] Celia Thaxter's Poems, p. 165.
[18] Stedman's An American Anthology, p. 610.

dark sounds suggesting a serious meaning, as "consider", "darkening", "wonder", "sorrow", and "shore", and a few which contrast vividly in thought as "rose", "music", "wisp", and "echo". The following line is significant in the interpretation of the crowd:

The burst of music down an unlistening street,

in which the irregular metre and sounds of "unlistening" make it onomatopoetic.

For the most part, the best sonnets of Mifflin, Edith Thomas, Gilder, and Santayana are tinged with the influence of a conventional tone, that of the poetry of Milton and Grecian poetry. That Mifflin was influenced by and made use of material taken from Grecian literature is evident in many titles, one being Echoes from Greek Idylls. Mifflin's sonnets are characterized by words, phrases, and ideas having classical associations. This may be illustrated by the first five lines of the sonnet, The Ship:

> I lay at Delos of the Cyclades,
> At evening, on a cape of golden land;
> The blind Bard's book was open in my hand,
> There where the Cyclop's makes the Odyssey's
> Calm pages tremble as Odysseus flees.[19]

The sonnet, Milton, illustrates Mifflin's most

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[19] Mifflin's Collected Sonnets, p. 89.

skillful use of classical allusions, the images of which wing the thought about Milton with beauty, music, feeling, and imagination:

> His feet were shod with music and had wings
> Like Hermes; far upon the peaks of song
> His sandals sounded silvery along;
> The dull world blossomed into beauteous things
> Where'er he trod; and Heliconian springs
> Gushed from the rocks he touched, round him a throng
> Of fair invisibles, seraphic, strong,
> Struck Orphean murmurs out of golden strings;
> But he, spreading keen pinions for a white
> Immensity of radiance and of peace,
> Up-looming to the Empyrean infinite,
> Far through ethereal fields, and zenith seas,
> High, with strong wing-beats and with eagle ease,
> Soared in a solitude of glorious light![20]

In these lines the images are beautiful in themselves; they do not seem to be a part of the poetry reflecting beauty on the central theme; they are merely a summary of all the classical associations around Delos. The line having the reference to the "blind Bard" suggests Mifflin's interest in Milton and the influence of his poetry with regard to pastoral scenery and to the many allusions to Greek mythology, in which lies much of the interest of Mifflin's sonnets.

With more delicate grace and beauty Edith Thomas invests her poetic nature material with the suggestion

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[20] Mifflin's Collected Sonnets, p. 70.

of Grecian beauty and atmosphere. This she did in her use of words such as found in these lines:

> Oh, who would storm with foolish half-fledged wings
> The Heaven of Song, and in one morning spend
> His lease of flight and music, and descend
> To be henceforth with dumb, unbuoyant things,--
> The scourge proud rashness from Apollo brings![21]

Other words and phrases having the same connotation are "Cere's daughter", "old Greek tale", "Muses", "Sparton bred", "to Phoebus dear", and "all the Muses as in act to sing". In many of them are words that suggest Grecian literature, and in others the reference to nature itself embodies the suggestion of Grecian beauty. This seems to be true in the following poem, The Oread, a characteristic of a few sonnets of Edith Thomas:

> She dwells upon the fountained heights serene,
> I by the broadening river's sullied flow;
> She could not breathe the air we breathe below,
> Nor we the air that wraps her pure demesne.
> Light loves her; there the morning first is seen,
> There long delays the wistful afterglow;
> Above her gleams the fountain-feeding snow,
> Beneath are forests all the twelvemonth green.
> She dwells afar; yet still the river sings
> What she has sung above its cradle bright;
> I look, and lo! the swarthy current brings
> An alpine bloom slipped through her fingers white;
> But not until the rivers seek their springs
> May any gift of mine achieve her height.[22]

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21 Thomas' Fair Shadow Land. "The Wine of Lusitania", p. 109.

22 Edith Thomas's A New Year's Mosque and Other Poems, p. 132.

In comparison with the sonnets of Mifflin and Edith Thomas, those of Gilder are more significant for the quality of their themes and their imaginative language. They reveal the poet's intuitive feeling for dignified, poetic words and phrases. For its delicacy of perception, for the beauty of the interaction of the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional qualities, and for the skill shown in the use of the normal Italian form, the following sonnet is an exquisite production:

"When Love Dawned"

When love dawned on that world which is my mind,
Then did the outer world wherein I went
Suffer a sudden, strange transfigurement;
It was as if new sight were given the blind.
Then where the shore to the wide sea inclined
I watched with new eyes the new sun's ascent;
My heart was stirred within me as I leant
And listened to a voice in every wind.
O purple sea! O joy beyond control!
O land of love and youth! O happy throng!
Were ye then real, or did ye only seem?
Dear is that morning twilight of the soul,--
The mystery, the waking voice of song,--
For now I know it was not all a dream.[23]

For the theme of this poem, Gilder sublimated an experience, making it stronger and more beautiful. Its beauty is inherent in the thought expressed in language

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[23] Gilder's Complete Poems, p. 62.

which fits the elevation of the idea. The poet has combined dignity and picturesqueness of style, using words which are not merely ornamental but which also illuminate the thought. In its development, Gilder procedes orderly from the idea that love is a dream to the realization that it is truth, thus combining truth and beauty. The words are more significant for their meaning than for their sounds and music, the accompaniment of which is to elevate the beauty of the idea. By giving careful attention to the choice and arrangement of appropriate words, Gilder has heightened and preserved the beauty of the theme.

It is interesting to note Gilder's characteristic style in a sonnet not influenced by Grecian thought:

In Wordsworth's Orchard
Dove Cottage

In Wordsworth's orchard, one sweet summer day,
Breathless we listened to his thrushes sing;
We heard the trickling of the little spring
Beneath the terrace; saw the tender play
Of breezes' midst the leaves; scarce could we say
The well-loved verses whose rich blossoming
Was on this narrow hillside; strange they ring
For tears that choke the number on their way.
Then home by winding Rothay did we turn
While bird, and bloom, and mountain seemed his voice
Deep sounding to the spiritual ear--
And this its message: Let love in the burn,
Here learn in holy beauty to rejoice,
Here learn true living, and the song sincere.[24]

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[24] Gilder's Complete Poems, p. 293.

The sonnets of Santayana are written in a style more nearly classical than any others of American poets. His style is best represented in the love sonnets of his sequence, tinged with Aristotle's philosophy. "There is an atmosphere about all of Mr. Santayana's work that conveys a sense of wandering in the moonlight; it is tempered, softened, stilled; it is like an Isis-veil cast over the eyes; but at times one becomes oppressed with the consciousness of himself, and of the impalpable visions glimpsed in the wan light, and longs to snatch the veil away and flee to the garish world again." [25] "In the sonnet he finds a medium whose classic distinction and subtlety are so harmonized to his nature and his characteristic mode of thought, that it becomes to him the predestined expression." [26]

The following sonnet represents the art and charm of Santayana's poetry:

Yet why, of one who loved thee not, command
Thy counterfeit, for other men to see,
When God himself did on my heart for me
Thy face, like Christ's upon the napkin, brand?
O how much subtler than a painter's hand
Is love to render back the truth of thee!
My soul should be thy glass in time to be,
And in my thought thine effigy should stand.

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[25] Rittenhouse's Younger American Poets, p. 105.

[26] Ibid., p. 108.

Yet, lest the churlish critics of that age
Should flout my praise, and deem a lover's rage
Could gild a virtue and a grace exceed,
I bid thine image here confront my page,
That men may look upon thee as they read,
And cry: Such eyes a better poet need. [27]

It is to be noticed that this sonnet is without artifice of style because the beauty of the poem is in the thought. The tone is somewhat solemn, dignified, and religious. The words suit the elevation of the idea, as expressed in those having the "o" sound associated with the significant meaning. Many of the words are abstract, such as "virtue", "grace", "love", and "soul". The word "glass" suggests the clear effect which seems to pervade the poem, giving it the quality of classical purity. The genuine poetic theme is made more classical in effect by the perfect regularity of the Petrarchan form. The lines flow smoothly and gracefully from one to another. The rhythm is in the meaning, the natural emphasis, and the natural pauses.

> "In the sonnets of Santayana were entwined these twin threads of nature and mystical seeking, of love of the world, and confidence that back of nature is a source for the spirit's beauty and peace."[28]

It is noticeable that the type of subject matter which an author selects determines largely the style of a sonnet.

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[27] Santayana's Poems, p. 45.

[28] Weirick's From Whitman to Sandburg in American Poetry, p. 115.

The nature poets who have been mentioned wrote sonnets somewhat conventional in tone; whereas Hayne and Cawein wrote sonnets colorful and fantastic in effect. The following poem characterizes the atmosphere of many sonnets of southern poets:

The South

Ah, where the hot wind with sweet odors laden
Across the roses faintly beats his wings,
Lifting a lure of subtle murmurings
Over the still pools that the herons wade in,
Telling of some far sunset-bowered Aidenn,
And in an orange-tree an oriole sings,
Whereunder lies, dreaming of unknown things,
With orange-blossoms wreathed, a radiant maiden,--
There is the poet's land, there would I lie
Under magnolia blooms and take no care,
And let my eyes grow languid and my mouth
Glow with the kisses of the amorous air,
And breathe with every breath the luxury
Of the hot-cheeked, sweet, heavy-lidded South.

--Richard Hovey.

The beautiful aspects of nature as pointed out in this sonnet give to the poetry of the South a romantic atmosphere. It is, indeed, the poet's land, for he has, at first hand, the colors, fragrance, and beauty of trees and flowers, combined with the music of birds, colorful sunsets, and white clouds upon which to let his imagination play.

The sonnets of Hayne show a tender regard for nature, a profusion of figurative language, and a gentle air of meditation. For these poetic qualities the following son-

net is typical of Hayne's style:

> Enough, this glimpse of splendor wed to shame;
> Enough this gilded misery, this bright woe.
> Pause, genial wind! that even here dost blow
> Thy cheerful clarion; and from dust and flame
> The noonday pest, the night-enshrouded blame,
> Uplift and bear me where the wild flowers grow
> By many a golden dell-side sweet and low,
> Shrined in the sylvan Eden whence I came.
> O woodland water! O fair-whispering pine!
> Loved of the dryad none but I have viewed!
> O dew-lit glen, and lone glade, breathing balm,
> Receive and bless me, till this tumult rude
> Merged in your verdant solitudes divine,
> My soul once more hath found her ancient calm! [29]

The feeling in the poem is for the delicate aspects of natural scenery. Hayne uses an apostrophe in "Pause, genial wind!" and then personifies the wind which blows his clarion. After this, the wind is admonished to "bear me where the wild flowers grow". The entire sestet is made up of apostrophes. Hayne views the water, the pine, and the dew-lit glen objectively, but writes subjectively. In this sonnet there are words that appeal to the senses of sight and sound. Vivid imagery is in "the wind blowing thy cheerful clarion," "wild flowers," "golden dell-side," "sylvan Eden," "dew-lit glen," and "woodland water". The delicate musical sounds of nature are suggested in the words, "pause, genial wind," "blow thy clarion," and " "fair-whispering pine." The mood of the poem is set by

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[29] Hayne's Complete Poems, p. 197.

the vowel sounds and meaning of such wordsas "bright", "genial", "cheerful", "breathing balm," "solitudes divine," and "ancient calm." The feeling is intensified by the contrasting sound of "t" as found in "bright", "might," "dew-lit," and "verdant". The sparkling effect is somewhat subdjed by the sound of "o" in "wood-day", "love", "soul," and "grow". The form is Petrarchan with a slight variation in the metre, which is irregular in the use of trochaic and anapestic feet in places where the sense is important. The rhythm may be determined by reading for the meaning. "Paude, genial wind!" begins with the trochaic foot; and "Loved of the dryad" is identical in metre. The irregularity of "misery and "whispering" is in the use of tho anapestic foot.

Like Hayne, Cawein wrote melodious fanciful sonnets, taking such subjects which can be treated in a picturesque fashion. The sonnet, Light and Wind, is the best representation of melody in verse, and of thoughts about music:

> Light that is music; music that one sees--
> Wagnerian music--where forever sways
> The spirit of romance, and gods and fays
> Take form, clad on with dreams and mysteries.[30]

The words of the poem are significant for their meaning,

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[30] Cawein's A Voice on the Wind, p. 64.

suggestions, and associations. They are rich in overtones that suggest the meaning of the words and their associations. The idea of music is kept uppermost by the repetition of the word, music, and the images which it suggests in this sonnet. The thought is made beautiful by fanciful imagery. Like Hayne, Cawein varied the metre of the form to suit the idea.

III

The sonnets of Frank Demster Sherman are, for the most part, reflections of a spiritual nature; the style in these is influenced by the selection of delicate subject matter. For its vivid imagery and rich variety of poetic devices, the sonnet, Music, is distinctive:

> In vain the quest: No mortal eyes may know
> The secret haunt wherein by day and night
> She shapes her dreams of audible delight
> And sends them forth to wander to and fro:
> Spirits of Sound, invisible they go
> To fill the world with wonder in their flight;
> Celestial voices, from whose starry height
> Strange hints of song steal down to earth below.
> Listen and hear the rhythmic echoes fall,--
> The winds and waves and leaves and bees and birds,--
> The blended harmony of reeds and strings,--
> Chorus and orchestra,--the voice and all
> The miracle of melody and words,--
> Music herself it is who dreams and sings! [31]

In the first place, Sherman chose a poetic, highly imagi-

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[31] Sherman's Lyrics of Joy, p. 86.

native theme, the association of music, dreams, and the beautiful aspects of nature. The poem is rich in figurative language and effective poetic artifices, as illustrated in the use of personification, metaphor, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. The thought is made picturesque through the personification of music sending out her dreams, making all nature melodious, and giving unity to the picture. Sherman used the normal Italian type with regularity. Each line leads naturally to the next one. The following line is an excellent imitation of rhythm in nature:

The winds and waves and leaves and bees and birds.

It illustrates also harmony in sounds, alliteration, and onomatopoeia.

One sonnet of Margaret Preston is important for having been inspired by Shakespeare. The sonnet, "Sit, Jessica", is a reproduction of the moonlight scene from The Merchant of Venice:

"Sit, Jessica"

As there she stood, that sweet Venetian night,
Her pure face lifted to the skies, aswim
With stars from zenith to horizon's rim,
I think Lorenzo scarcely saw the light
Asleep upon the bank, or felt how bright
The patines were. She filled the heavens for him;
And in her low replies the cherubim
Seemed softly quiring from some holy light.

> And when he drew her down and soothed her tears,
> Stirred by the minstrelsy, with passionate kiss,
> Whose long, sweet iterations left her lips
> Trembling as roses tremble after sips
> Of eager bees, the music of the spheres
> Held not on rhythmic rapture like to this! [32]

In this sonnet, "the sweet Venetian night" determines the romantic atmosphere, giving it a far-away setting. Bright sounds of "a", "e", "i", and "t", associated with the meaning of the words, correspond to the light and brightness of the stars. The sounds and rhythm of the name, Lorenzo, suit the theme, as do other long words in their suggestions and associations, "minstrelsy", "iterations", and "cherubim". In the sestet, the word, "trembling" is onomatopoetic in the simile in which the trembling of Jessica's lips is compared to that of a rose. The form is strictly Petrarchan with the variation of the rhyme scheme in the sestet, c d e e cd.

Markham, Van Dyke, and Woodberry contributed a small number of sonnets on serious themes; and, therefore, their style is marked by a dignity of language and an elevated tone. In the sonnet, The Last Furrow, Markham personified death as a ploughman. The diction produces a sombre tone, but it is not melancholy. In a similar manner

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[32] Crandall's Representative Sonnets by American Poets, p. 258.

he wrote Love's Vigil:

> Love will outwatch the stars, and light the skies
> When the last star falls, and the silent dark devours;
> God's warrior, he will watch the allotted hours,
> And conquer with the look of his sad eyes;
> He shakes the Kingdom of darkness with his sighs,
> His quiet sighs, while all the Infernal Powers
> Tremble and pale upon their central towers,
> Lest, haply, his bright universe arise.
> All will be well if he have strength to wait,
> Till his lost Pleiad, white and silver-shod,
> Regains her place to make the perfect Seven;
> Then all the worlds will know that Love is Fate--
> That somehow he is greater even than Heaven
> That in the Cosmic Council he is God.[33]

In this poem strength is suggested in the personification of "Love" as God's warrior. It is a variation of the Petrarchan form, not in the set rhyme scheme, but in its metre and rhythm.

For being forceful in the expression of ideas and for having nobility of thought, Van Dyke's sonnet, National Monuments, is compelling:

National Monuments

> Count not the cost of honour to the dead!
> The tribute that a mighty nation pays
> To those who loved her well in former days
> Means more than gratitude for glories fled;
> For every noble man that she hath bred,
> Lives in the bronze and marble that we raise,
> Immortalized by arts' im ortal praise,
> To lead our sons as he our fathers led.
> These monuments of manhood strong and high
> Do more than forts or battleships to keep

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[33] Markham's The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems, p. 54.

Our dear-bought liberty. They fortify
The heart of youth with valour wise and deep;
They build eternal bulwarks, and command
Eternal strength to guard our native land. [34]

In this sonnet Van Dyke has given his language the simplicity and directness of prose in developing the thought which clusters around the influence of national monuments. The words have been chosen with justness and precision with reference to their significant meaning and the poetic effect. The natural order of the sentences conforms to the lines and falls smoothly into the metre and rhythm of the regular Petrarchan form.

Woodberry reflected his interest in international matter in the sonnets entitled, At Gibraltar and America to England. For having clear statements of definite ideas and words suitable to a dignified theme, the following sonnet is outstanding:

America to England

Mother of nations, of them eldest we,
Well is it found, and happy for the state,
When that which makes men proud first makest them great,
And such our fortune is who sprang from thee,
And brought to this new land from over sea
The faith that can with every household mate,
And freedom whereof law is magistrate,
And thoughts that make men brave, and leave them free.
O mother of our faith, our law, our lore,
What shall we answer thee if thou shouldst ask

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[34] Van Dyke's The White Bees, p. 38.

How this fair birthright doth in us increase?
There is no home but Christ is at the door;
Freely our toiling millions choose life's task;
Justice we love, and next to justice peace. [35]

The magnitude of the subject of this poem has determined the treatment of the theme. The effect of solemnity and stateliness is inherent in the meaning and the arrangement of appropriate words, simple, dignified, and sincere. A formal effect is gained by the irregular order of words, and in the use of "end-stopped" lines, which produce pauses, and which give value to the content of one line at a time without affecting the unity of the whole. Woodberry has used the normal Italian type with strict regularity.

IV

In a group of poets interested in the art of poetry rather than in the subject matter, there were Taylor, Stedman, Aldrich, and Bunner, all of whom wrote about themes which would enable them to produce pleasing effects. Of these, Taylor and Stedman usually adhered to the tradition of the past in the use of the form; whereas Aldrich and Bunner varied the metre and rhythm to suit the thought. That Taylor turned to the past

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[35] Stedman's An American Anthology, p. 594.

is evident in the following sonnet:

> If I could touch with Petrarch's pen this strain
> Of graver song, and shape to liquid flow
> Of soft Italian syllables the glow
> That warms my heart, my tribute were not vain;
> But how shall I such measured sweetness gain
> As may your golden nature fitly show,
> And with the heart-light shine, that fills you so,
> It pales the graces of the cultured brain?
> Long have I known, Love better is than Fame,
> And Love hath crowned you; yet if any bay
> Cling to my chaplet when the years have fled
> And I am dust, may this which bears your names
> Cling latest, that my love's result shall stay
> When that which mine ambition wrought is dead![36]

The words are beautiful not only for their sounds, but also for their associations and imagery. This sonnet shows the result of studied efforts to select and to arrange words which would fit the theme and conform to the metrical structure, as seen in the first quatrain where the inverted order of the words causes unnatural pauses at the ends of several lines.

Like Taylor, Stedman had an ear for music in the selection and arrangement of words; but unlike Taylor he used the form with more skill. In the poem which follows, Stedman used graceful run-on lines in which the rhythmical and grammatical pauses fall together:

Proem to a Victorian Anthology

> England! since Shakespeare died no loftier day
> For thee than lights herewith a century's goal,--

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[36] Taylor's Poetical Works, p. 213.

Nor statlier exit of heroic soul
Conjoined with soul heroic,--nor a lay
Excelling theirs who made renowned thy sway
Even as they heard the billows which outrall
Thine ancient sea, and left their joy and dole
In song, and on the strand their mantles gray.
Star-rayed with fame thine Abbey windows loom
Above his dust, whom the Venetian barge
Bore to the main; who passed the twofold marge
To slumber in thy keeping--yet make room
For the great Laurifer, whose chanting large
And sweet shall last until our tongue's far doom.[37]

Aldrich and Bunner were somewhat apart from the other poets of their group in that they were influenced by the lighter, more artistic poetry of the French Petrarchists, du Bellay and Ronsard; they wrote about delicate, fanciful subjects in regular, musical verse. Of these two, Aldrich was, perhaps, the author of the more finished poetry, owing to his selection of dainty subject matter, and to his instinctive feeling for the poetic value of words and phrases. The sonnet, Enamored Architect of Airy Rhyme, is an expression of his poetic philosophy. In it he states his attitude toward art:

O Wondersmith, O worker in sublime
And heaven-sent dreams, let art be all in all.[38]

"This art in miniature" sums up Aldrich's philosophy of art in poetry, according to which principles he wrote the following sonnet:

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[37] Stedman's Complete Poems, p. 453.

[38] Aldrich's Poetical Works, II, p. 142.

Egypt

Fantastic sleep is busy with my eyes:
I seem in some waste solitude to stand
Once ruled of Cheops; upon either hand
A dark illimitable desert lies,
Sultry and still--a zone of mysteries.
A wide-browed Sphinx, half buried in the sand,
With orbless sockets stares across the land,
The woefulest thing beneath these brooding skies
Save that loose heap of bleached bones that lie
Where haply some poor Bedowin crawled to die.
Lo! while I gaze, beyond the vast sand sea
The nebulous clouds are downward slowly drawn,
And one bleared star, faint glimmering like a bee,
Is shut in the rosy outstretched hand of Dawn.[39]

It is a picturesque description of a Sphinx in Egypt, made romantic by its far-away setting. Aldrich took a subject which he treated in a fantastic manner and developed the thought in musical, imaginative language. The thought is transfigured by a dream as suggested in the first line,

Fantastic sleep is busy with my eyes,

which builds a bridge into dreamland, or to Egypt. Here in the distance, he views a picture of the Sphinx on which he focuses the light. Atmosphere is created by the "dark illimitable desert, sultry and still." In the center of the setting, giving balance to the picture and harmonizing with the mood of the background, is the

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[39] Aldrich's Poetical Works, II, p. 146.

Sphinx,

The wofulest thing beneath these brooding skies.

The wierd feeling about the scene is intensified by the introduction of "bleached bones," made so by meaning and associations of the words, and by the sounds of "b" and "s". Alliteration is effective also in "orbless sockets stares," prolonging the ghastly feeling suggested by the empty sockets. Above and behind the Sphinx are the "nebulous clouds", made more beautiful in contrast with the desert and the Sphinx. Then, at last, the beauty of it all is enhanced by the introduction of "Dawn" personified, holding "one bleared star" in her "rosy outstretched hand". The rosy light of dawn and the clouds contrast vividly with the darkness of the desert and the Sphinx; and the beauty of "Dawn", the suggested figure, emphasizes by contrast the strength of the Sphinx.

The poem is made up of short words having prevailing sounds of "a", "e", "i", and "o", interspersed with longer words as "illimitable", "glimmering", and "solitude", which allow more scope for alliteration, consonantal affinities, and vowel sounds, and which give a pleasing variety to the rhythm. In addition to being effective in sounds and rhythm, the words enrich the theme with signi-

ficant meaning and Oriental associations as illustrated by "Cheops", "Sphinx", and "Bedowin". Aldrich varied the rhyme and rhythm of the form; in the second quatrain "mysteries" rhymes imperfectly with "skies", and the sestet has the rhyme scheme cc de de; the metre is varied by the use of the anapestic foot. This poem is distinctive for its artistic workmanship. Others which are equally as important are Sleep, Outward Bound, and Enamored Architect of Airy Rhyme, the last of which it is conceded to be the most finished sonnet in American poetry.

The sonnets of Bunner were written in a lighter vein than those of Aldrich. They show that Bunner chose subject matter through which he could achieve especially fanciful effects. The spirit of this poetry is represented by the sonnet, Lutetia:

> Often in the visions of the night I seem
> To pace thy avenues with enchanted feet;
> Walk thy broad boulevards from the mid-day heat
> Till myriad gas-jets through the calm dusk gleam;
> See moonlight crown Napoleon's tower supreme;
> Watch in the Latin Quarter's darkest street
> From revelling in some cavernous retreat,
> Strange student-shapes into the cool night stream--
> Young hungry gods of genius--or where beam
> Lights of Lampsakian gardens: where is blown
> White hot the fire of folly, to turn again.
> Yet ever flies the spirit of my dream
> To that high garret, where, sick, blind, alone,
> Lies Heine on his pallet-prison of pain.[40]

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40 Bunner's Poems, p. 248.

It is to be noted that Bunner took his theme first-hand from nature and threw over it a veil of moonlight, recasting the picture of night in his imagination. The words of the sonnet have romantic associations and pleasing sounds. The serious feeling accompanying the last image adds quality to the mood of the poem. Bunner departed from the regular metre by introducing now and then an anapestic foot and, at times, a trochaic foot for emphasis.

V

Another group of sonneteers following in the older tradition used not only the Petrarchan form, but also the Shakespearean. This group was much smaller than that consisting of the followers of Petrarch exclusively; and, in fact, consisted of only two of the chief American poets, Bryant and Lanier, and these minor poets, Stoddard, Gilder, Hovey, Celia Thaxter, and Lizette Woodworth Reese. The number of Shakespearean sonnets belonging to these poets is small; only Hovey and Lanier wrote more than one or two.

Before 1865 Bryant experimented with the Spenserian form of the sonnet as illustrated by Mutation, this poem being the only one of its kind found among the poetry

of authors who have been considered in this study. November and Consumption represent Bryant's Shakespearean sonnets, the style of which does not differ in quality from that of the Petrarchan sonnets. November is typical of Bryant's musical verse:

November

Yet one smile more, departing, distant sun!
One mellow smile through the soft vapory air,
Ere, o'er the frozen earth, the loud winds run,
Or snows are sifted o'er the meadows bare.
One smile on the brown hills and nakes trees,
And the dark rocks whose summer wreaths are cast,
And the blue gentian-flower, that, in the breeze,
Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last.
Yet a few sunny days in which the bee
Shall murmur by the hedge that skirts the way,
The cricket chirp upon the russet lea,
And man delight to linger in thy ray.
Yet one rich smile, and we will try to bear
The piercing winter frost, and winds, and darkened air.[41]

It is noticeable that the words fall into unbroken metre and rhythm; they are beautiful in meaning, delicate in associations, and suggest the delightful pictures of the details of nature. Bryant has used personification in speaking of the wind, the hills and trees, and the flowers. The phrase, "piercing winter frost", is onomatopoetic. The feeling is restrained. It must be noticed that Bryant closed the sonnet with a line of six iambic feet.

Lanier used the form for a small number of sonnets,

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[41] Bryant's Poetical Works, p. 99.

the best of which is To Nannette Falk-Auerbach, written about Lanier's favorite theme, music. This poem does not compare with The Mocking Bird in melody of verse, but it is placed here to illustrate how an important poet used the form:

To Nannette Falk-Auerbach

Oft as I hear thee, wrapt in heavenly art,
The massive message of Beethoven tell
With thy ten fingers to the people's heart
As if ten tongues told news of heaven and hell,--
Gazing on thee, I mark that not alone,
Ah, not alone, thou sittest: there by thee,
Beethoven's self, dear living lord of tone,
Doth stand and smile upon thy mastery.
Full fain and fatherly his great eyes glow:
He says, "From Heaven, my child, I heard the call
(For, where an artist plays, the sky is low):
Yea, since my lonesome life did lack love's all,
In death, God gives me thee: thus quit of pain,
Daughter, Nannette! in thee I live again.[42]

Like Lanier, Celia Thaxter expressed in a Shakespearean sonnet her feeling for music. The rhythm is somewhat broken; the pauses seemingly mark the end of each line. The sonnet, Mozart, is characteristic of Celia Thaxter's use of the apostrophe:

Mozart

Most beautiful among the helpers thou!
All heaven's fresh air and sunshine at thy voice
Flood with refreshment many a weary brow,
And sad souls thrill with courage and rejoice
To hear God's gospel of pure gladness sound
So sure and clear in this bewildered world,

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[42] Lanier's Poems, p. 102.

Till the sick vapors that our sense confound
By cheerful winds are into nothing whirled.
O matchless melody! O perfect art!
O lovely, lofty voice, unfaltering!
O strong and radiant and divine Mozart,
Among earth's benefactors crowned a king!
Love shalt thou be while time may yet endure,
Spirit of health, sweet, sound, and wise, and pure.[43]

And again, music became the subject of Shakespearean sonnet when Gilder described the music of a 'cello in the sonnet entitled The 'Cello. Of these sonnets on music, The Cello is the best for its smooth rhythm, which flows harmoniously from one line to another. In Bryant's November the images appeal to the sense of sight; whereas in The 'Cello the images appeal to the sense of hearing.

The 'Cello

When late I heard the trembling 'cello play,
In every face I read sad memories
That from dark, secret chambers where they lay
Rose, and looked forth from melancholy eyes.
So every mournful thought found there a tone
To match despondence: sorrow knew its mate;
Ill fortune sighed, and mute despair made moan;
And one deep chord gave answer, "Late,--too late".
Then ceased the quivering strain, and swift returned
Into its depths the secret of each heart;
Each face took on its mask, where lately burned
A spirit charmed to sight by music's art;
But unto one who caught that inner flame
No face of all can ever seem the same.[44]

Stoddard made use of the Shakespearean form to

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[43] Celia Thaxter's Poems, p. 72.

[44] Gilder's Complete Poems, p. 257.

present a characterization of Abraham Lincoln. The words of this sonnet are plain, but significant, selected for truth to describe a notable person. It seems that Stoddard deliberately thought of the measures and made his poem move as if wooden. The imagination of the sonnet lies in the picture of Lincoln bearing an "Atlas-load". The couplet expresses a strong feeling of admiration for a great national character. The following sonnet is important for the expression of deep respect for a great personality:

Abraham Lincoln

This man whose homely face you look upon,
Was one of Nature's masterful, great men,
Born with strong arms, that unfought battles won;
Direct of speech, and cunning with the pen.
Chosen for large designs, he had the art
Of winning with his humor, and he went
Straight to his mark, which was the human heart;
Wise, too, for what he could not break he bent.
Upon his back a more than Atlas-load,
The burden of the Commonwealth, was laid;
He stooped, and rose up to it, though the road
Shot suddenly downwards, not a whit dismayed.
Hold, warriors, councillors, kings! All now give place
To this dear benefactor of the Race.[45]

Two sonnets, The Old Path and Keats, represent Lizette Woodworth Reese's use of the form; and the poem, A Wet June Day, shows an irregularity in the rhyme pattern,

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[45] Stoddard's Complete Poems, p. 434.

a combination of the rhyme schemes of both the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean forms, abba cddc efef gg. The poetry of these sonnets is below that of her famous sonnet, Tears, Petrarchan in form.

The most distinctive Shakespearean sonnets are those of Hovey, who will be considered more fully with the sonneteers who were original in the use of the form. Sonnets which reflect Hovey's individuality are World and Poet, Faith and Fate, and America, all of which have unusual metre and rhythm. However, it is appropriate to quote here the first quatrain of Love in the Winds which conveys the spirit of Hovey in his poetry:

> My heart bounds with the horses of the sea,
> And plunges in the wild ride of the night,
> Flaunts in the teeth of tempest the large glee
> That rides out Fate and welcomes gods to fight.[46]

Of these poets, Bryant, Lanier, Celia Thaxter, Gilder, Lizette Woodworth Reese, and Hovey, who followed the Shakespearean form in a few of their sonnets, it can be said that no one wrote sonnets comparable to the best in American poetry. November represents the sonnet poetry that has the most musical figurative language; and World and Poet stands for the best in the expression of extreme individuality in the use of the form. Of the

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[46] Hovey's Along the Trail, p. 28.

sonnets which have been mentioned here, only the mechanical structure points them out as being Shakespearean.

VI

SONNETEERS WHO HAVE TAKEN LIBERTIES WITH THE FORM

To the historian of American literature, the smaller group of sonneteers who disregarded established conventions and dared to take liberties with the Shakespearean (in one case) and the Petrarchan forms is of greater interest than is the large group just discussed. As already indicated, the poets belonging to this class are Lanier, Van Dyke, Dunbar, Sill, Riley, Howells, Hovey, and Robinson. In a few sonnets Lanier, Van Dyke, Dunbar, Sill, and Howells have shown a small amount of originality in the use of the form; but, in a more pronounced way, Riley, Hovey, and Robinson have departed far from the original use of the sonnet form.

Lanier was a musician as well as a poet. His feeling for music prompted him to disregard technical metre and give attention wholly to the time value of rhythm, interpreted from the point of view of music. The first three lines of the poem, The Mocking Bird, illustrate

the melody of his verse:

> Superb and sole, upon a plumed spray
> That o'er the general leafage boldly grew,
> He summ'd the woods in song. [47]

The sonnet is alliterative; the chief accent is on "s", as seen in "superb", "sole", "spray", "Sweet Science", and "Shakespeare". It is alliterative also in the sounds of "l" and "p". The short and long words are arranged so that the rhythm has the correct value in time, and the sounds flow musically from one to another. The pattern of sound throughout the poem is woven on the vowel sounds of "e", "o", "a", "u", and "i". The following characteristic line is harmonious in sounds, meaning, and smoothly flowing rhythm:

> Of languid doves when long their lovers stray.

The form is Petrarchan, having the rhyme scheme, cc dd ee, in the sestet.

A change in Lanier's style is illustrated by lines from the sonnets on Columbus from the poem, Psalm of the West:

> Pursue the West but long enough 'tis East! [48]

and,

> "Go back, go back!" they prayed: "our hearts are lead"--
> "Friends, we are bound into the West", I said.[49]

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[47] Lanier's Poems, p. 27.
[48] Boynton's American Poetry, p. 459.
[49] Ibid., p. 459.

Van Dyke and Sill began to take themes from their immediate surroundings as found in their sonnets, Work and Living, respectively. Dunbar added new themes to the sonnet poetry when he praised Harriet Beecher Stowe for what she did for the cause of slavery; and expressed in Slow Through the Dark his hope for the colored race.

The sonnets of Sill and Riley are important for being both original and individual. A few of them reflect a part of the life of the West, and introduce the use of dialect, a medium of expression new in the sonnet. Sill of the Far West took his themes from his surroundings and wrote sonnets, chiefly, reflective. The poem, Untimely Thought, represents Sill's usual theme, characteristic of all his sonnets but one, The Agile Sonneteer, in which he criticized in a clever way the use of the sonnet.

Riley of the Middle West drew his themes from his surroundings and personal interests. He expressed ordinary emotions in unadorned language and in simple melodies. The following sonnet expresses Riley's pride in his state, and illustrates the spirit of his poetry:

Indiana

Our Land--our Home!--the common home indeed
Of sail-born children and adopted ones--

The stately daughters and the stalwart sons
Of Industry:--All greeting and godspeed!
O home to proudly live for, and, if need
Be, proudly die for, with the roar of guns
Blent with our latest prayer.--So died men once....
Lo, Peace!....As we look on the land They freed--
Its harvests all in ocean-overflow
Poured round autumnal coasts in billowy gold--
Its corn and wine and balmed fruits and flowers,--
We know the exaltation that they know
Who now steadfast inheritors, behold
The Land Elysian, marveling "This is ours!"[50]

In this sonnet Riley has stated definite ideas with exact words to convey his feeling for his state. He has not made use of poetic artifices, except in the last line in which he has used the metaphor in comparing Indiana with "The Land Elysian" to emphasize in a poetic way the wealth of his state. The form is regular Petrarchan, except in the second quatrain in which there is an irregular rhyme in "guns" and "once", and in the last line which has an anapestic foot.

The sonnet, Old Chums, is an illustration of Riley's use of dialogue:

Old Chums

"If I die first", my old chum paused to say,
"Mind! not a whimper of regret:--instead,
Laugh and be glad, as I shall.--Being dead,
I shall not lodge so very far away
But that our mirth shall mingle.--So, the day
The word comes, joy with me." "I'll try", I said,
Though, even speaking, sighed and shook my head
And turned with misted eyes. His roundelay
Rang gaily on the stair; and then the door

50 Riley's The Complete Works, v. V, p. 81.

Opened and - closed....Yet something of the clear,
Hale hope, and force of wholesome faith he had
Abided with me--strengthened more and more.--
Then--they brought his broken body here:
And I laughed--whisperingly--and we were glad.[51]

Riley showed originality in the sonnet in his use of dialect. The following lines from The Ginoine Ar-ticle illustrate "Hoosier" dialect:

Talkin' o' poetry,--There're few men yit
'At's got the stuff boiled down so's it'll pour
Out sorgum-like. [52]

The lines from Brudder Sims are in the Negro dialect:

Dah's Brudder Sims! Dast slam yo' Bible shet
An' lef' dat man above--kase he's de boss
Ob all de preachahs ev' I come across! [53]

And the lines from To James Newton Matthews show Scotch dialect:

Oho! Ye sunny, sonnet-singin' vagrant,
Flauntin' your simmer sangs in sic a weather!
Ane maist can straik the bluebells and the heather
Keekin aboon the snaw, and bloomin' fragrant! [54]

A striking change in the style of the sonnet was made when Howells, Hovey, and Robinson took realistic subject matter for the sonnet, using the form with pronounced individuality.

Howells was the first sonneteer of the East to select unpoetic commonplace subject matter. The sonnet,

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51 Riley's The Complete Works, IV, p. 250.
52 Riley's Complete Works, II, p. 134.
53 Ibid., II, p. 320.
54 Riley's The Complete Works, v. III, p. 240.

Vision, illustrates material taken from the world of actuality. It is an interpretation of the life of humble folk, the octave of which follows:

> Within a poor man's squalid home I stood;
> The one bare chamber, where his work-worn wife
> Above the stove and wash-tub passed her life,
> Next the sty where they slept with all their brood;
> But I saw not that sunless, breathless lair,
> The chamber's sagging roof and reeking floor;
> The smeared walls, broken sash and battered door;
> The foulness and forlornness everywhere.[55]

The line beginning with "But I saw not" prepares the reader for the thought of the sestet in which Howells idealized this humble scene, intensifying its darkness by contrast of pleasant details. The words of the sonnet have ugly hard sounds and unpleasant sense, as in "squalid", "work-worn", "brood", "smeared", "foulness", and "forlorn". They describe a dismal, hopeless outlook on life, conveying at the same time the exact thought.

In the following poem, Society, composed of two sonnets, Howells presents, in the first one, a romantic picture of life; and, in the second one, a realistic picture:

Society

> I looked and saw a splendid pageantry
> Of beautiful women and of lordly men,
> Taking their pleasure in a flowery plain,
> Where poppies and the red anemone,

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[55] Stedman's An American Anthology, p. 388 382.

And many another leaf of cramoisy,
Flickered about their feet, and gave their stain
To heels of iron or satin, and the grain
Of silken garments floating far and free
As in the dance they wove themselves, or strayed
By twos together, or lightly smiled and bowed,
Or curtseyed to each other, or else played
At games of mirth and pastime, unafraid
In their delight; and all so high and proud
They seemed scarce of the earth whereon they trod.

I looked again and saw that flowery space
Stirring, as if alive, beneath the tread
That rested now upon an old man's head
And now upon a baby's gasping face,
Or mother's bosom, or the rounded grace
Of a girl's throat; and what had seemed the red
Of flowers was blood, in gouts and gushes shed
From hearts that broke under that frolic pace.
And now and then from out the dreadful floor
An arm or brow was lifted from the rest,
As if to strike in madness, or implore
For mercy; and anon some suffering breast
Heaved from the mass and sank; and as before
The revellers above them thronged and prest.[56]

In these sonnets Howells has not selected words for their adornment, but rather for their truthful meaning. He had described a scene which is brilliant in light and color to harmonize with the mirth of aristocratic people. The words are rich in sparkling sounds and associations, as in "pageantry", "flowery", "poppies", "red anemone", "dance", and "curtseyed". The words do not always fall into the regular iambic pentameter rhythm; irregularity is in "beautiful", "flickered", and "taking", to place

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56 Venable's Poets of Ohio, p. 233.

emphasis on thought and to suggest a formal atmosphere. The characteristics of the men and women are pointed out vividly by the use of words of color and action. The life is somewhat artificial, the unreality of which is suggested in the last line,

They seemed scarce of the earth whereon they trod.

Beneath the surface of this fantastic picture of life, Howells finds reality. In the last sonnet, he pierces the mask of artificiality, pointing out the frailty of humanity, and the reality of what seemed to be all glitter and frolic. Howells has presented the theme with the simplicity, directness, and grammatical structure of prose, except in one instance where he uses alliteration in "gouts and gushes" to intensify the meaning and to convey a grim thought in a truthful way. Except for several irregular lines, the form is Petrarchan.

Hovey shows in the feeling and thought of his sonnets that about life he was hopeful and optimistic. His interpretations of life are expressed in the thought and in the spirit of his verse, which has an excellent singing quality. It conveys the buoyancy of life that is strong and vigorous, having the spirit of a singer bursting forth in unrestrained joy. For this quality, the poem, World

and Poet, is outstanding, the music of which is in both the meaning and the rhythm of the words. It is noticeable especially, in the word, "sing", which appears in eleven lines:

World and Poet

"Sing to us, Poet, for our hearts are broken;
Sing us a song of happy, happy love,
Sing of the joy that words leave all unspoken,--
The lilt and laughter of life, oh sing thereof!

Oh, sing of life, for we are sick and dying;
Oh, sing of joy, for all our joy is dead;
Oh, sing of laughter, for we know but sighing;
Oh, sing of kissing, for we kill instead!"

How should he sing of happy love, I pray,
Who drank love's cup of anguish long ago?
How should he sing of life and joy and day,
Who whispers Death to end his night of woe?

And yet the Poet took his lyre and sang,
Till all the dales with happy echoes rang. [57]

This sonnet is rich in the associations of joys and sorrows of life; the feeling of each is heightened by the association of the other. Hovey has mingled laughter with seriousness in the suggestion of Death; and, in the closing line, he has intensified the sounds of song by the suggestion of echoes. The poem is rich in beautiful, musical words having sounds of "s", "a", "t", "i", and

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[57] Hovey's Along the Trail, p. 92.

"e", which radiate gladness; and in "o", "l", "v", and "d", which are solemn in tone. The idea of happiness is carried along by the repetition of the word, "happy", and through the sounds and meaning of the words arranged in unusual rhythm to bring out the idea of music. The rhythm is unusual for the combination of trochaic, anapestic, and iambic feet to accent important words and to give variety to the rhythm. Each of the first three lines begins with an accented syllable, "Sing", and the words, "broken" and "unspoken" close two lines with unaccented syllables, incidentally being onomatopoetic. It is true also of the lines ending with "dying" and "sighing". Monotony in the repetition of the word, "sing", is relieved by "oh" in the second quatrain. The rhythm in the octave gives a lilting effect, whereas that of the sestet is regular, iambic metre to correspond with a more serious mood, dominated by the meaning of Death. The feeling of song is intensified by echoes to correspond in value with that of Death. Thus, the sonnet closes magnificnetly.

In the sonnet, America, Hovey imitated through the metre, the movement of marching to the beat of drums. This effect he secured in the association of sounds and

the meaning of words, arranged with strict regularity to bring out the iambic metre strongly:

> We came to birth in battle; when we pass
> It shall be to the thunder of the drums.
> We are not one that weeps and saith ALAS,
> Nor one that dreams of dim milleniums. [58]

And another sonnet, Faith and Fate, is distinguished for its Valkyr spirit, its words like ringing hoof-beats, and its galloping rhythm: [59]

Faith and Fate

> To horse, my dear, and out into the night!
> Stirrup and saddle and away, away!
> Into the darkness, into the affright,
> Into the unknown on our trackless way!
> Past bridge and town missiled with flying feet,
> Into the wilderness our riding thrills;
> The gallop echoes through the startled street,
> And shrieks like laughter in the demoned hills;
> Things come to meet us with fantastic frown,
> And hurry past with maniac despair;
> Death from the stars looks ominously down--
> Ho, ho, the dauntless riding that we dare!
> East, to the dawn, or west or south or north!
> Loose rein upon the neck of Fate--and forth! [60]

This closing line is one of Hovey's finest; and discloses his typical mood. The effect of this poem is secured by strong action words, combined with iambic, trochaic, and anapestic feet, arranged in a galloping, rhythmical order. These three sonnets, World and Poet, America, and Faith

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[58] Hovey's Along the Trail, p. 18.
[59] Rittenhouse's Younger American Poets, p. 10.
[60] Hovey's Along the Trail, p. 30.

and Fate are Shakespearean in form; but, because they are individual in the extreme, they have been placed here. After Business Hours is Petrarchan in form and portrays a quiet mood.

The style of the sonnet in the hands of Robinson became still more individual in its tone and more realistic in subject matter. In employing the form, Robinson went so far from the original use that the relation of his sonnets to the earlier ones is the relation between twig and tree. The earlier sonnets are unified and complete in themselves; each one has a single thought, is a complete picture, or expresses the feeling of a moment; whereas those of Robinson do not leave the impression of finality, for any one of his sonnets might suggest an endless stream of unhappy ideas, and negative attitudes pertaining to adverse circumstances. Another difference is in the use of realistic language. Robinson took as much care to avoid poetic diction as was ordinarily taken to use it, a diction employed as a literary medium to present new regions of thought and feeling. And last, Robinson's choice of subject matter shows individuality in presenting phases of psychological realism, new in the sonnet, as illustrated in the poems, Aaron Stark and

Cliff Klingenhagen. These sonnets show that Robinson is a brilliant analyst of character, with a deep understanding of the portraits which he presents. While a large number of these sonnets present Robinson's typical portraits, others reflect his gloomy cast of mind. This seems to be true of the one which follows:

Thomas Hood

The man who cloaked his bitterness within
This winding-sheet of puns and pleasantries,
God never gave to look with common eyes
Upon a world of anguish and of sin:
His brother was the branded man of Lynn;
And there are woven with his jollities
The nameless and eternal tragedies
That render hope and hopelessness akin.
We laugh, and crown him; but anow we feel
A still chard sorrow-swept,--a weird unrest;
And thin dim shadows home to midnight steal,
As if the very ghost of mirth were dead--
As if the joys of time to dreams had fled,
Or sad led away with Ines to the West.[61]

In this poem the use of monosyllabic words prevails, but a few ploysyllabic words have been introduced to add richness to meaning, to give variety in sounds and consonantal affinities, and to cause the rhythm to flow more harmoniously. The effect of the poem comes from the meaning and from the associations of the words, selected not for their beauty, but for their exact truth; for example, "bitterness", which suggests the state of mind

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[61] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 91.

of Thomas Hood. The unhappiness of the theme, Robinson has made more pleasant by the outward effect of "puns and pleasantries", the tone of which is emphasized by alliteration. Another example of the same poetic device is in "hope and hopelessness". It is noticeable that these words are opposite in meaning. Again, it will be noticed that "jollities" and "tragedies" are associated; the effect of one is intensified by the association of the other. Robinson has gone farther in making somewhat unpleasant material more pleasant by accompanying the thought with smooth rhythm in the use of the Petrarchan form. The metre is regular iambic, and the rhythm is unbroken. The grammatical, metrical, and rhythm pauses harmonize. The rhyme of the octave is varied; it is neither strictly masculine, nor strictly feminine, for in the octave a polysyllabic word, such as "pleasantries", is supposed to rhyme with "eyes". That of the sestet, cdc eed, is also a variation of the form.

The sonnet, Thomas Hood, shows regularity of verse, whereas two lines,

> Tiering the same dull webs of discontent,
> Clipping the same sad alnage of the years, [62]

from the sonnet, The Clerks, have an irregularity in the

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[62] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 90.

trochaic foot at the beginning of each line. And a line from the sonnet, Aaron Stark,

Cursed and unkempt, shrewd, shrivelled and morose, [63]

represents a few lines found in Robinson's sonnets for having, seemingly, no rhythm. In many lines, these words are characteristic of Robinson's selection of a vocabulary which has hard sounds and disagreeable associations. In this instance, they are appropriate to the theme in the description of a reprobate, a type which is the subject of many of Robinson's sonnets.

If one considers the body of sonnets written strictly in the forms used by earlier poets, he is impressed by the comparative weakness of this work. Except for the sonnets of Bryant, Longfellow, and Lowell, it does not represent the best poetry of American literature, for it has been produced by poets who have sought, for the most part, to imitate the poetry of famous predecessors. It has been said that Longfellow's Book of Sonnets are important for their "ripeness of style and imagery." Those of Bryant and Lowell share in the literary qualities of their long poems and should be mentioned here for that reason. Bryant, Longfellow, and Lowell stressed subject

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[63] Robinson's Collected Poems, p. 86.

matter which to them was more important than polished regularity; whereas Aldrich placed more emphasis on the form, selecting dainty, pleasant subjects which could be treated in an imaginative, figurative manner. Woodberry wrote on subjects which appeal to the intellect rather than to the emotions, giving the language of the sonnet the directness of prose. The sonnets of Hovey and Robinson are important for the individuality expressed in the choice of subject matter, new to the sonnet. Representative of no particular time or place are the classical sonnets of Santayana, distinctive for being finished and artistic.

Of the poets who were distinctly imitative, the chief ones are Taylor, Stoddard, Stedman, Hayne, and Cawein, all of whom tried to imitate the music of Keats and Tennyson. Helen Hunt Jackson, Louise Chandler Moulton, and Celia Thaxter imitated the Romantic poets in choosing nature for their themes, while Mifflin and Edith Thomas imitated conventional nature scenes of Grecian poetry. Boker aspired to be called the "American Sidney" when he wrote his sequence on love. Although nearly all of the sonnets are, as just stated, imitative, yet one may find a few among them which will be placed in collec-

tions of notable poetry.

Among the poems of the period, however, which students of American literature will continue to read, there are certainly more than a dozen sonnets. One would not willingly sacrifice Longfellow's sonnets on the Divina Commedia, nor Nature, A Summer Day by the Sea, and The Cross of Snow. Gilder's excellent sonnet, On the Life-Mask of Abraham Lincoln, and sonnets on the sonnet will be read. One should also include among the strong, distinctive poetry of the nineteenth century Woodberry's sonnets entitled At Gibraltar; Rilly's When She Comes Home; Lanier's The Mocking Bird; Hayne's Laocoon; Lizette Woodworth Reese's Tears; Hovey's World and Poet; and Robinson's Aaron Stark, Cliff Klingenhagen, and Calvary.

A Sonnet is a moment's monument---
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To the one deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.
A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul,---its converse to what Power 'tis due:--
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve: or 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

- Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

From the preceding survey of the field, it is evident that the sonnet has undergone many changes. Because the form has been definitely set, those changes have come within its limitations, chiefly in the original and individual uses of the set form. At the beginning of the period from 1865 to 1900, the subject matter was marked by a formality in thought and speech; whereas at the close of the period the form was used less exclusively for nobleness of thought and showed less majesty of language. In order to see how the sonnet has shared in the changes of other poetry, it is necessary to make a brief review of the field.

At the beginning of this period Bryant, Longfellow, and Lowell were influenced by the Romantic English poets in the choice of nature subjects. After the Romantic Movement had reached its height, Taylor, Stoddard, Stedman, Lanier, Hayne, Cawein, Aldrich, and Bunner turned their attention to the poets of the past and began to imitate Shelley, Keats, and Tennyson. As a result, emphasis was placed on polished regularity of the sonnet rather than on the subject matter. Dialect, which first

appeared in Lowell's Bigelow Papers, later found its way into the sonnets of Sill and Riley. In these sonnets new subject matter began to appear, for there was a tendency to interpret the realities of life in real language, both new in the sonnet. Howells went a step farther in describing squalid surroundings in a sonnet, Vision. Just as other poetry became realistic and individual, so did the sonnet in the hands of Hovey and Robinson. The psychological realism of Hardy was an influence on Robinson in the selection and treatment of portraits, typical of the sonnets of Robinson. On the other hand, the sonnets of the poets influenced by Grecian poetry and philosophy, particularly those of Santayana, show no trace of a particular time; neither do they reflect the influence of any literary movement.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the poets did not limit themselves to sublime subjects, for the sonnet was no longer reserved for subjects of that nature, and was no longer the instrument of majestic utterance. However, Woodberry's sonnets, At Gibraltar, would indicate that sublime subjects and dignified language still had a place in the sonnet in America. In contrast to these sonnets of Woodberry and those characterized by Grecian dignity and beauty, the later sonnets are marked

by unstudied ease and naturalness of manner and language. Two frequent uses of the sonnet lie in the character portraiture and that of singing lyricism. From the foregoing statements, one may draw the conclision that the sonnet has merely shared in the changes that have come over modern poetry in all its forms.

The poetry in sonnet form does not constitute a major part of the poetry of America; but the sonnets of Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, and Lanier reflect the poetic qualities of their well known longer poems. This is true also of the sonnets of Robinson, whose best work is in his longer poems. It seems that Santayana is the only poet considered in this study whose best poetry appears in his sonnets. On the other hand, of the chief American poets of the period, 1865-1900, Whitman is the only one who did not make use of the sonnet.

On glancing back over the work of the sonneteers in America, one sees that a few of the sonnets are notable. The Petrarchan form has been used by every poet included in this study, by most of them exclusively, and the Shakespearean, by a few. Two important themes seem to dominate: nature and the soul of man.

Among the seventeen hundred sonnets written by the thirty-one poets studied, there are a few that will be

remembered. People will not forget the message of Longfellow's sonnets; poets will turn to the sonnets of Aldrich for poetry written for art's sake; present day readers, interested in the poetry of psychological realism, will value those of Robinson; and those who enjoy the beauties and idealism of Grecian philosophy will read Santayana's faultless sonnets which reveal qualities of a deeply spiritual life.

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